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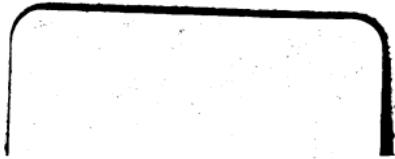
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THE
WAY OF SALVATION.

Meditations

FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR,

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN

OF

BLESSED ALPHONSUS LIGUORI.

BY THE

REV. JAMES JONES.



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P R E F A C E.

NO subtilty of thought, nor *loftiness of words*, will be found in the following pages; but the greatest simplicity and the plainest forms of expression. Nothing here will perplex the understanding, but all will powerfully appeal to the heart: for while the following "Meditations" are remarkable for the beautiful simplicity of style so peculiar to their Beatified Author, they are not less characterized by profound piety, ardent love of God, and tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God. They are each divided into three points; each point generally includes acts of the love of God, of contrition for sin, and of supplication for final perseverance; and every last point concludes with a short prayer to the ever Blessed Mary.

In a preface to a work similar to the present by the same Blessed Liguori, he says: "I entreat my readers not to be "wearied with the frequent repetition of prayers for the graces "of the love of God and of perseverance: since these two "graces are the most necessary for the attainment of eternal "salvation." 'The grace of divine love,' says St. Francis of "Sales, 'contains in itself all other graces, because the virtue "of charity towards God brings with it all other virtues:' *All "good things came to me together with her.* *Wisd.* vii. 11. He "who loves God is humble, chaste, obedient, mortified, in a "word, he is possessed of all virtues. 'Love and do what "you will,' says St. Augustin, 'because he who loves God "carefully avoids every thing that can offend him, and seeks "for nothing but to please him in all things.'"

"The other grace, that of perseverance, is that which enables "us to gain the eternal crown. St. Bernard says: 'Heaven "is promised indeed to those who begin a new life, but is given

“to those only who persevere in it. ‘But perseverance,’ as “the Holy Fathers teach, ‘is given to those only who pray for “it.’ Our Blessed Saviour had before said: *That we ought “always to pray and not to faint.* *St. Luke, xviii. 1.* The cause “why so many miserable sinners, although they may have been “pardoned, continue not in the state of grace, is, because they “do not pray always, but faint: they receive pardon, but, be- “cause they neglect to implore of God the gift of perseverance, “particularly in the time of temptation, relapse into their for- “mer sins. On the other hand, although the grace of perse- “verance is entirely gratuitous, and cannot be merited by our “own exertions, ‘yet,’ says Father Suarez, ‘it is infallibly to “be obtained by means of prayer;’ St. Augustin having said “before him: ‘The gift of perseverance is to be gained by “prayer.’”

Blessed Liguori concludes his preface with the following devout offering to Almighty God and pious request to his readers, in which his unworthy translator begs humbly to join: “May all tend to the glory of God! I beg of my readers, when “they shall read this book, to recommend me whether alive or “dead to Jesus Christ; and I promise to do the same for all “who shall do me this charity.”

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THE WAY OF SALVATION.

PART I.

MEDITATIONS SUITABLE FOR ALL TIMES IN THE YEAR.

Meditation First.

On eternal Salvation.

I. OUR most important affair is that of our eternal salvation; upon it depends our happiness or misery for ever. This affair will come to an end in eternity, and will decide whether we shall be saved or lost for ever; whether we shall have acquired an eternity of delights, or an eternity of torments; whether we shall live for ever happy, or for ever miserable. O God, what will my lot be? Shall I be saved, or shall I be lost? I may be either. And if I may be lost, why do I not embrace such a life, as may secure for me life eternal? O Jesus, thou didst die to save me; yet have I been lost, as often as I have lost thee my sovereign good: suffer me not to lose thee any more.

II. Men esteem it a great affair to gain a law-suit, to obtain a post of honour, or to acquire an estate. Nothing, however, which will end with time, deserves to be esteemed great. Since therefore all the goods of this world will one day end in our regard; as we shall either leave them, or they will leave us; that affair alone should be esteemed great,

upon which depends eternal happiness or eternal misery. O Jesus, my Redeemer, cast me not away from thy face, as I have deserved! I am indeed a sinner; but I am grieved from the bottom of my heart for having offended thy infinite goodness. Hitherto I have despised thee, but now I love thee above all things. Henceforth, thou alone shalt be my only good, my only love. Have pity on a sinner who penitently casts himself at thy feet and desires to love thee. If I have grievously offended thee, I now ardently desire to love thee. What would have become of me, if thou hadst called me out of life, when I had lost thy grace and favour? Since thou, O Lord, hast shown so much mercy to me, grant me grace to become a saint.

III. Let us awaken our faith in a heaven and a hell of eternal duration: one or other will be our lot. O God, how could I, knowing that by committing sin I was condemning myself to eternal torments, how could I sin so often against thee and forfeit thy grace? Knowing that thou art my God and my Redeemer, how could I, for the sake of a miserable gratification, so often turn my back upon thee? O God, I am sorry above every evil for having thus despised thee. I love thee above every good, and from henceforth, I will suffer the loss of all things rather than lose thy friendship. Give me strength to continue faithful. And do thou, O Blessed Virgin Mary, pray for me and assist me.

Meditation Second.

On Sin, as it dishonours God.

I. *BY transgression of the law thou dishonourest God.* Rom. ii. 23. When the sinner deliberates

whether he shall give or refuse his consent to sin, he takes the balance into his hands to decide which is of most value—the favour of God, or some passion, some worldly interest or pleasure. When he yields to temptation, what does he do? He decides that some wretched gratification is more desirable than the favour of God. Thus it is that he dishonours God, declaring, by his consent, that a miserable pleasure is preferable to the divine friendship. Thus, then, O God, have I so many times dishonoured thee, by esteeming thee less than my miserable passions!

II. Of this the Almighty complains by the prophet Ezekiel, when he says: *They violated me among my people, for a handful of barley and a piece of bread.* xiii. 19. If the sinner should exchange God for a treasure of jewels, or for a kingdom, it would indeed be doing a great evil, because God is of infinitely more value than all the treasures and kingdoms of the earth. But for what do so many exchange him? for a vapour, for a little dirt, for a poisoned pleasure, which is no sooner tasted than fled. O God, how could I have had the heart for such vile things, so often to despise thee, who hast shown so much love for me? But, behold my Redeemer, how I now love thee above all things; and because I love thee, I feel more regret for having lost thee, my God, than if I had lost all other goods, and even my life. Have pity on me, and forgive me. I will never more incur thy displeasure. Grant that I may rather die than offend thee any more.

III. *Lord, who is like to thee?* Ps. xxxiv. 10. And what good things, O God, can be comparable to thee, O infinite goodness? But how could I have turned my back upon thee, to give myself to those vile things which sin held out to me? O Jesus, thy precious blood is my hope. Thou hast promised to hear him who prays to thee. I ask

thee not for the goods of this world; I ask thee for the pardon of those sins which I have committed against thee, and for which I am sorry above every other evil. I ask thee for perseverance in thy grace until the end of my life. I ask thee for the gift of thy holy love; my soul is enamoured of thy goodness; hear me, O Lord. Only grant that I may love thee both here and hereafter, and as to all things else, do with me as thou pleasest. My Lord, and my only good, suffer me not to be any more separated from thee! Mary, mother of God, do thou also listen to me, and obtain for me, that I may ever belong to God, and that God may be my inheritance for ever.

Meditation Third.

On the patience of God in waiting for sinners.

I. WHO in this world has so much patience with his equals, as God with us his creatures, in bearing with us, and waiting for our repentance, after the many offences we have committed against him? Ah! my God, had I thus offended my brother, or my father, long ago would they have driven me from their face! O father of mercies, *cast me not away from thy face*; but have pity on me.

II. *Thou hast mercy*, says the Wise man, *upon all, because thou canst do all things, and overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance.* Wis. xi. 24. Men conceal their sense of the injuries which they receive, either because they are good, and know that it belongs not to themselves to punish those who offend them; or because they are unable, and have not the power to revenge themselves. But to thee, my God, it does belong to take revenge of

the offences which are committed against thy infinite majesty; and thou indeed art able to avenge thyself, whenever thou pleasest; and dost thou dissemble? Men despise thee; they make promises to thee and afterwards betray thee: and dost thou seem not to behold them, or as if thou hadst little concern for thy honour? Thus, O Jesus, hast thou done towards me. Ah! my God, my infinite good, I will no longer despise thee, I will no longer provoke thee to chastise me. And why should I delay until thou abandonest me in reality and condemnest me to hell? I am truly sorry for all my offences against thee. Would that I had died rather than offended thee! Thou art my Lord, thou hast created me, and thou hast redeemed me by thy death; thou alone hast loved me, thou alone deservest to be loved, and thou alone shalt be the sole object of my love.

III. My soul, how couldst thou be so ungrateful and so daring against thy God? When thou didst offend him, could he not have suddenly called thee out of life and punished thee with hell? And yet he waited for thee; instead of chastising thee, he preserved thy life and gave thee good things. But thou, instead of being grateful to him and loving him for such excessive goodness, thou didst continue to offend him! O my Lord, since thou hast waited for me with so great mercy, I give thee thanks. I am sorry for having offended thee—I love thee. I might at this hour have dwelt in hell, where I could not have repented, nor have loved thee. But now that I can repent, I grieve with my whole heart for having offended thy infinite goodness; and I love thee above all things, more than I love myself. Forgive me, and grant that from this day I may love no other but thee, who hast so loved me. May I live for thee alone, my Redeemer, who for me didst die upon the cross. All my hopes are in thy bit-

ter passion. O Mary, mother of God, assist me by your holy intercession.

Meditation Fourth.

On the Certainty of Death.

I. *WE must die*: how awful is the decree! *We must die*. The sentence is passed: *It is appointed for all men once to die*. *Heb.* ix. 27. Thou art a man, and thou must die. It would be madness for any one to attempt to delude himself with the idea that he shall not die. A poor man may flatter himself that he may become rich, or a vassal that he may be a king; but who can ever hope to escape death? One dies old, another young, but all at last must come to the grave. I therefore must one day die and enter eternity. But what will be my lot for eternity? happy or miserable? My Saviour Jesus, be thou a Saviour to me!

II. Of all those who were living upon the earth at the beginning of the last century, not one is now alive. The greatest and most renowned princes of this world have exchanged their country: scarcely does there remain any remembrance of them, and their bare bones are hardly preserved in stone monuments. Make me, O God, more and more sensible of the folly of loving the goods of this world, and for the sake of them renouncing thee, my sovereign and infinite good. What folly have I not been guilty of; and how much it grieves me! I give thee thanks for having made me sensible of it.

III. A hundred years hence, at most, and neither you nor I will be any longer in this world; both will have gone into the house of eternity. A day, an hour, a moment is approaching which will

be the last both for you and me; and this hour, this moment is already fixed by Almighty God; how then can we think of any thing else but of loving God, who will then be our judge? Alas! what will my death be? O my Jesus and my judge, what will become of me, when I shall have to appear before thee to give an account of my whole life? Pardon me, I beseech thee, before that moment arrive which will decide my happiness or misery for eternity. I am sorry, for having offended thee, my sovereign good. Hitherto I have not loved thee; but now I will love thee with my whole soul. Grant me the grace of perseverance. O Mary, refuge of sinners, have pity on me.

Meditation Fifth.

On the loss of all things in Death.

I. *THE day of destruction is at hand. Deut. xxxii.*
 35. The day of death is called the day of destruction, because then is destroyed all that man has acquired, honours, friends, riches, possessions, kingdoms, all are then no more. What then doth it profit us to gain the whole world, if in death we must leave all? All is at an end at the bed side of the dying man. Is there any king, think you,— said St. Ignatius to Xavier when he sought to bring him to God,—who has taken with him into the other world even a thread of purple to mark his sovereignty? Has any rich man taken with him a single coin, or even one servant to attend him? In death all is left behind. The soul enters eternity, alone and unattended, except by her works. Woe to me! where are my works to accompany me to a blessed eternity? I can discover none but such as render me deserving of eternal torments.

II.. Men come into the world of unequal conditions : one is born rich, another poor, one a noble, another a plebian : but all go out of it equal and alike. Consider the graves of the dead : see if thou canst discover among the bodies which are there interred, who was a master and who a servant, who was a king and who a beggar. O God, while others amass the fortunes of this world, may my only fortune be thy holy grace. Thou alone art my only good both in this life and in the next.

III. In one word, every thing on earth will come to an end. All greatness will end, all misery will end ; honours will end, ignominies will end ; pleasures will end, sufferings will end. Blessed in death, therefore, not he who has abounded in riches, honours, and pleasures, but he who has patiently endured poverty, contempt and sufferings ! The possession of temporal goods affords no consolation at the moment of death ; that alone consoles us which has been done or suffered for God. O Jesus, separate my heart from this world, before death entirely takes me from it. Help me with thy grace ; thou indeed knowest how great is my weakness. Permit me not to be any more unfaithful to thee, as I have hitherto been. I am sorry, O Lord, for having so often despised thee. Now will I love thee above every good, and will die a thousand times rather than forfeit thy grace. But the infernal one ceases not to tempt me ; in mercy abandon me not, leave me not to myself, permit me not to be any more separated from thy love. O Mary, my hope, obtain for me the grace of perseverance.

Meditation Sixth.

On the great thought of Eternity.

I. THUS did St. Augustin designate the thought of eternity: *The great thought: magna cogitatio.* It was this thought that induced so many solitaries to retire into deserts, so many religious, even kings and queens, to shut themselves up in cloisters, and so many martyrs to sacrifice their lives in the midst of torments, in order to acquire a happy eternity in heaven, and to avoid a miserable eternity in hell. The Ven. John of Avila converted a certain lady with these two words: *Reflect*, said he to her, *on these two words: Ever and Never.* A certain monk went down into a grave that he might meditate continually on eternity, and constantly repeated, *O eternity! eternity!* How frequently, my God, have I deserved the eternity of hell! Oh that I had never offended thee! Grant me sorrow for my sins, have compassion on me.

II. The same Ven. John of Avila says, that he who believes in eternity and becomes not a saint, should be confined as one deranged. He who builds a house for himself, takes great pains to make it commodious, airy and handsome; and says: "I labour and give myself a great deal of trouble about this house, because I shall have to live in it all my life." And yet how little is the house of eternity thought of! When we shall have arrived at eternity, there will be no question of our residing in a house more or less commodious, or more or less airy; the question will be of our dwelling in a region overflowing with delights, or in a gulf of endless torments. And for how long a time? not for forty or fifty years, but for ever, as long as God shall be God. The saints to obtain salvation

thought it little, to give their whole lives to prayer, penance, and the practice of good works. And what do we do for the same end? O my God! many years of my life are already past, already death is near at hand, and what good have I hitherto done for thee? Give me light, and strength, to devote the remainder of my days to thy service. Too much alas! have I offended thee, I desire henceforth to love thee.

III. *With fear and trembling work out your salvation.* *Phil. ii. 12.* To obtain salvation we must tremble at the thought of being lost, and tremble not so much at the thought of hell, as of sin, which alone can send us thither. He who dreads sin, avoids dangerous occasions, frequently recommends himself to God, and has recourse to the means of keeping himself in the state of grace. He who acts thus, will be saved; but for him who lives not in this manner it is morally impossible to be saved. Let us attend to that saying of St. Bernard: *We cannot be too secure where eternity is at stake.* Thy blood, O Jesus, my Redeemer is my security. I should have been already lost on account of my sins, hadst thou not offered me thy pardon, on condition of my repentance for having offended thee. I am sorry therefore with my whole heart for having offended thee who art infinite goodness. I love thee, O sovereign good, above every other good. I know that thou willest my salvation, and I will endeavour to secure it by loving thee for ever. O Mary, mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

Meditation Seventh.

On the death of Jesus Christ.

I. HOW is it possible to believe that the Creator should have been willing to die for us, his creatures? Yet we must believe it because faith so teaches it. Hence the Council of Nice commands us to confess: *I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, who for us men, and for our salvation was crucified for us, suffered and was buried.* And if it is true, O God of love, that thou hast died for the love of men, can there be one who believes this, and does not love thee, so loving a God? But O God! of those who are guilty of such ingratitude I am one, and not only have I not loved thee, my Redeemer, but I have many times, for the sake of gratifying my miserable and depraved inclinations, renounced thy grace and thy love.

II. Thou hast then, my Lord and my God, died for me: and how could I, knowing this, have so often disowned thee and turned my back upon thee? But thou, my Saviour, didst come down from heaven to save that which was lost. My ingratitude therefore does not deprive me of the hope of pardon. Yes, O Jesus, I hope that thou wilt pardon me all the offences which I have committed against thee, through the death which thou didst suffer for me on Mount Calvary. Oh that I could die of grief and of love as often as I think of the offences which I have committed against the love which thou hast shown towards me! Make known to me, O Lord, what I must do henceforward, to make amends for my ingratitude. Keep up in my mind a continual remembrance of the bitter death thou wast pleased to suffer for me, that I may love thee and never more offend thee.

III. God then has died for me; and shall I be able to love any thing else but God? No, my Jesus, I will love none but thee. Thou hast loved me too much. Thou canst do no more to compel me to love thee. I have obliged thee by my sins to cast me away from thy face; but thou hast not abandoned me for ever; thou regardest me with tender affection; thou art about to call me to thy love. I will no longer resist. I love thee, my sovereign good: I love thee, my God, who art worthy of infinite love: I love thee, my God, who hast died for me. I love thee, but I love thee not enough, do thou increase my love. Grant that I may forsake all things, and forget all things else, to please and to love thee, my Redeemer, my love, and my all. O Mary, my hope, recommend me to your divine Son.

Meditation Eighth.

On abusing the mercy of God.

I. THERE are two ways by which the devil endeavours to deceive men to their eternal ruin: after they have committed sin he tempts them to despair on account of the severity of divine justice; but before they have sinned he encourages them to do so by the hope of obtaining the divine mercy. And he effects the ruin of numberless souls as well by the second as by the first artifice. *God is merciful:* says the obstinate sinner to him who would convert him from the iniquity of his ways: *God is merciful.* But as the Mother of God expresses it in her canticle, *his mercy is to them that fear him.* *Luke i. 50.* Yes, the Lord deals mercifully with him that fears to offend him, but not so with the

man who presumes upon his mercy to offend him still more. O God, I give thee thanks for having made me sensible of thy patience in bearing with me. Behold, I am of the number of those who presuming on thy goodness have offended thee again and again.

II. *God is merciful*: but he is also just. Sinners are desirous that he should be merciful only, without being just: but that is impossible, because were he only to forgive and never to chastise, he would be wanting in justice. Hence, Father Avila observes, that patience on the part of God towards those who avail themselves of his compassion to offend him the more, would not be compassion, but a want of justice. He is bound to chastise the ungrateful. He bears with them for a certain time, but after that abandons them. Such a punishment, O God, has not as yet overtaken me, or else I had now dwelt in hell, or had been obstinate in my sins. But no: I desire to amend my life, I desire to offend thee no more. Though I have hitherto displeased thee, I am sorry for it with my whole soul; I desire henceforth to love thee, and I desire to love thee more than others do, because thou hast not shown the same patience towards others as towards me.

III. *God is not mocked*. *Gal. vi. 7.* Yet he would be mocked, if the sinner could go on continually offending him, and yet afterwards enjoy him in heaven. *What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap.* He who sows good works, shall reap rewards; but he who sows iniquities, shall reap chastisements. The hope of those who commit sin because God is forgiving, is an abomination in his sight: *their hope*, says holy Job, *is an abomination.* *xi. 20.* Hence, the sinner, by such hope, provokes God to chastise him the sooner, as that servant would provoke his master, who, because

his master was good, took advantage of his goodness to behave ill. O Jesus, such I fear, has been my conduct towards thee; because thou wast good I have made no account of thy precepts. I confess, that I have done wickedly; and I detest all the offences I have committed against thee. Now do I love thee more than myself, and I desire never more to displease thee. Ah, if I should again offend thee by mortal sin! Permit it not, O Lord, rather let me die. O Mary, mother of perseverance, do thou assist me.

Meditation Ninth.

On the emptiness and shortness of Human Life.

I. HOLY David, said, that the happiness of this life is as the dream of one awaking from sleep: *as the dream of them that awake.* Ps. lxxii, 20. All the greatness and glory of this world will appear no more to poor worldlings, at the hour of death, than as a dream to one awaking from sleep, who finds that the fortune which he had acquired in his dream, ends with his sleep. Hence did one who was undeceived wisely write on the skull of a dead man. *Cogitanti omnia vilescent: He who thinks, undervalues all things.* Yes, to him who thinks on death, all the goods of this life, appear, as they really are, vile and transitory. Nor can that man fix his affections on the earth, who reflects that in a short time he must leave it for ever. Ah my God, how often have I despised thy grace for the miserable goods of this world! From henceforth I desire to think of nothing but of loving and serving thee. Assist me with thy holy grace.

II. *And is it thus then that worldly grandeur and*

sovereign power must end! Such was the exclamation of St. Francis Borgia, when he beheld the corpse of the empress Isabella, who had died in the flower of her youth. Reflecting upon what he saw, he resolved to bid adieu to the world, and to give himself entirely to God, saying: *I will henceforward serve a master who will never forsake me.* Let us detach ourselves from present goods before death tears us away from them. What folly it is to expose ourselves to the danger of losing our souls, for the sake of some attachment to this miserable world, from which we shall soon have to depart, for soon will it be said to us by the minister of God: *Go forth, Christian soul, out of this world!* O my Jesus, that I had always loved thee! How many offences have I been guilty of against thee! Teach me how to correct my disorderly life, for I am willing to do whatever thou pleasest. Accept of my love, accept of my repentance, in which I love thee more than myself, and crave thy mercy and compassion.

III. Reflect that you cannot remain for ever in this world. You must one day leave the country in which you now reside; you must one day go out from the house in which you now dwell, to return to it no more. Think that many before you inhabited the same room in which you are at present reading; that they slept in the same bed in which you are accustomed to sleep: and where are they? gone into eternity. The same will happen to you. Make me sensible, O God, of the injustice I have been guilty of in turning my back upon thee, my sovereign good; and grant me the sorrow to bewail my ingratitude as I ought. O that I had died rather than ever offended thee, Suffer me not to live any longer ungrateful for the love which thou hast shown me. My dear Redeemer, I love thee above all things, and I desire to love thee to the best of my power during the remain-

der of life. Strengthen my weakness by thy grace; and do thou, Mary, mother of God, intercede for me.

Meditation Tenth.

On the contempt with which the sinner treats God.

I. GOD himself declares that the sinner treats him with contempt, and complains of it in these words: *I have brought up children, and exalted them: but they have despised me.* Isa. i, 2. I have brought up my children, I have preserved and nourished them; but with base ingratitude they have despised me. But who is God who is thus despised by men? He is the Creator of heaven and earth; he is the sovereign infinite good, in whose sight men and angels are as a drop of water, or a grain of sand; *as a drop of a bucket, as a little dust.* Isa. xl. 15. In a word, all things created, in the presence of his infinite greatness, are as though they were not: *All nations are before him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to him as nothing and vanity.* Isa. xl. 17. Behold me, O God, a daring sinner who have presumed to despise thy infinite majesty. But while thou art infinite majesty, thou art also infinite mercy. I love thee, O Lord, and because I love thee I am sorry for having offended thee, do thou have pity on me.

II. And, O God, who am I who have despised thee? A poor helpless worm, who have nothing but what thou in thy bounty hast bestowed upon me. Thou hast given me my soul, my body, the use of reason, and numberless other benefits in this world; and I have made no other use of them all but to offend thee my benefactor. Nay more:

at the very time that thou didst preserve my life, that I might not fall into hell as I deserved, I abused thy goodness and forbearance. O my Saviour, how couldst thou have had such patience with me? Wretch that I am, how many nights have I slept under thy displeasure! But thou wouldest not have me perish. I trust, O my Jesus, in thy blessed passion that thou wilt enable me to change my life. Let not that sacred blood be lost, which with so much pain and sorrow thou didst shed for my salvation.

III. But, O God, what have I done! Thou, my Redeemer, hast shown that regard for my soul, as to shed thy blood for its salvation, and I have been so wretched as to allow it to perish for a mere nothing, for a caprice, for a maddening passion, for a miserable gratification, for contempt of thy grace and love. Ah! if faith did not assure me that thou hast promised to pardon those who repent, I should not now dare to implore thy forgiveness. O my Saviour, I kiss thy sacred wounds, and for the love of these wounds I beseech thee to forget the injuries which I have committed against thee. Thou hast said that, when the sinner repents, thou wilt forget all his ingratitude. I am sorry above every evil for having despised thee, my sovereign good; make haste to pardon me, as thou hast promised, let me be quickly reconciled to thee. I love thee now more than myself, may I never more incur thy displeasure. O Mary, refuge of sinners, succour a poor sinner who invokes thy assistance.

Meditation Eleventh.

On the pain of loss.

I. THE greatest pain of hell is not the fire, nor the darkness, nor the stench, nor any other of all the material torments of that dreadful prison of despair, it is the pain of loss, that is, the pain of having lost God, which of itself, may be said to constitute hell. The soul was created to be for ever united to God, and to enjoy the sight of his enrapturing countenance. God is its last end, its only good, so that all the goods of earth and heaven, without God, could not make it happy. Hence it is, that if a condemned soul in hell could possess and love God, hell, with all its torments, would become to such a soul a paradise. But this will be its sovereign punishment, which will render it for ever inconceivably miserable, to be deprived of God for all eternity, without the least hope of ever again beholding him or loving him. Jesus my Redeemer, nailed to the cross for my sake, thou art my hope; O that I had died rather than offended thee!

II. The soul, being created for God, has an instinctive tendency to become united with its sovereign good, its God; but being united to the body, when it wallows in iniquity, it becomes so darkened by the created objects which allure the senses, that it loses its sight, and has so little knowledge of God, as no longer to desire to be united to him. But when separated from the body, and from sensible objects, then it will know that God is the only good that can render it happy; hence as soon as it shall have departed hence, it will feel itself drawn with most powerful attraction towards an union with God; but having left this life an enemy of God,

it will be not only kept back from him by its sins, as by a chain, but dragged by them into hell, there to be for ever separated and at a distance from God. The wretched soul in that eternal dungeon, will know how beautiful God is, but will not be able to behold him. It will know how amiable God is, but will not be able to love him; it will even feel itself forced by its sins to hate him; and this shall be its hell of hells, to know that it hates a God who is infinitely lovely. It will desire that it were possible, to destroy God, to whom it is hateful; and to destroy itself, hating God; and this will be the eternal occupation of this unhappy soul. Do thou, O Lord, have pity on me.

III. This torment will be immensely increased by the remembrance of the graces which God bestowed upon it, and the love which he evinced towards it during its life-time. It will especially call to mind the love of Jesus Christ in shedding his blood, and laying down his life for its salvation; but ungrateful soul, not to forego its own miserable gratifications, it consented to lose God, its sovereign good; and it will find that no hope will be left of ever regaining him. Ah! my God! were I in hell, I should not be able to love thee, nor to repent of my sins; but as I have it now in my power to repent and to love thee, I am sorry with my whole soul for having offended thee, and love thee above all things. Grant me to remember continually that hell which I have deserved, that I may love thee with still greater and greater fervour. O Mary, refuge of sinners, do not abandon me.

Meditation Twelfth.

On the particular judgment.

I. *IT is appointed unto men once to die, and after this, the judgment.* *Heb. ix. 27.* It is of faith, that, immediately after death, we shall be judged according to our works in this life. And it is also of faith, that, upon this judgment, will depend our eternal salvation or perdition. Imagine yourself to be in your agony, and to have only a short time to live. Think that in a short time you would then have to appear before Jesus Christ to give an account of your whole life. Alas! how alarming would the sight of your sins then be to you. Jesus, my Redeemer, pardon me, I beseech thee, before thou judgest me. I know that I have many times already deserved to be sentenced to eternal death. No, I desire not to present myself guilty before thee, but penitent and pardoned. O my sovereign good, I am grievously sorry for having offended thee.

II. O God, what will be the anguish of the soul when it shall first behold Jesus Christ as its judge, and behold him terrible in his wrath? It will then see how much he has suffered for its sake; it will see what great mercies he has exercised towards it, and what powerful means he has bestowed upon it for the attainment of salvation; then will it also see the greatness of eternal goods, and the vileness of earthly pleasures, which have wrought its ruin; it will then see all these things, but to no purpose, because then there will be no more time to correct its past errors; what shall have then been done, will be irrevocable. Before the judgment seat of God, neither nobility, nor dignity, nor riches, will be considered; our works alone will be weighed

there. Grant, O Jesus, that when I first behold thee, I may see thee appeased; and for this end, grant me the grace to weep, during the remainder of my life, over the evil which I have done in turning my back upon thee, to follow my own sinful caprices. No, I desire never more to offend thee. I love thee and desire to love thee for ever.

III. What content will that Christian enjoy at the hour of death, who has left the world to give himself to God; who has denied his senses all unlawful gratifications; and who, if he has on some occasions been wanting, has at least been wise enough afterwards to do condign penance for it! On the other hand, what anguish shall that Christian experience who has continually relapsed into the same vices, and at last finds himself at the point of death! Then will he exclaim: Alas! in a few moments I must appear before Jesus as my judge, and I have not as yet even begun to change my life! I have many times promised to do so, but I have not done it; and now, in a short time, what will have become of me? Ah, my Jesus and my judge, I return thee thanks for the patience with which thou hast hitherto waited for me. How many times have I myself written my own eternal condemnation! Since thou hast thus waited to pardon me, reject me not now prostrate at thy feet. Receive me into thy favour through the merits of thy bitter passion. I am sorry, my sovereign good, for having despised thee. I love thee above all things. I desire never more to forsake thee. O Mary recommend me to your Son Jesus, and do not abandon me.

Meditation Thirteenth.

On preparing for the particular judgment.

I. *BE you ready: for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come.* St. Luke, xii. 40. The time of death will not be the time to prepare ourselves to die well: to die well and happily, we must prepare ourselves before-hand. There will not be time then to eradicate bad habits from the soul, to expel from the heart its predominant passions, and to extinguish all affection to earthly goods. *The night cometh when no man can work.* St. John ix. 4. All in death will be night, when nothing will be seen; and hence, nothing done. The heart hardened, the mind obscured, confusion, fear, the desire of health, will all render it almost impossible at the hour of death to set in order a conscience confused and entangled in sin.

II. The saints thought they did but little, though they spent their whole lives in preparing for death, by acts of penance, prayer, and the practice of good works; and they trembled when they came to die. The venerable John, of Avila, although he had led a very holy life from his youth, when it was announced to him that he was about to die, made answer and said, *O that I had but a little more time to prepare myself for death!* And what shall we say when the summons of death shall be brought to us? No, my God, I do not wish to die disquieted and ungrateful, as at present I should die, if death were to overtake me; I desire to change my life, I desire to bewail my offences against thee, I desire to love thee with my whole heart. O Lord, help me, enable me to do something for thee, before I die: for thee, who hast died for the love of me.

III. *The time is short*, says the Apostle. Yes, we have but a short time in which to set our accounts in order. Hence the Holy Ghost admonishes us: *Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it quickly*. Whatever thou art able to do to-day, put it not off till to-morrow: for to-day is passing away, and to-morrow may bring death, which will deprive thee of all means of doing good, or of amending what thou hast done amiss. *Woe to me!* if death should find me still attached to this world! Ah, my God, how many years have I lived at a distance from thee! And how hast thou had so much patience with me, in waiting for me, and in calling me so often to repentance! I thank thee, O my Redeemer, for thy long forbearance, and I hope to thank thee for it for ever in heaven. *The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever.* Psalm lxxxviii. 2. Hitherto I have not loved thee, and have made little account of being or not being loved by thee; but now I do love thee with my whole heart; I love thee above all things, more than I love myself, and I desire nothing so much as to be loved by thee; and recollecting how I have despised thy love, I would willingly die of grief for having done so. Jesus, grant me perseverance in virtue. Mary, my holy mother, obtain for me the happiness of being faithful to God.

Meditation Fourteenth.

On the sufferings of the souls in hell in their mental faculties.

I. THE souls in hell will be tormented in their *memories*. Never, in the abode of infinite misery, will they lose for a moment the remembrance of the time which was allowed them in this life to

practise virtue, and to make amends for the evil which they had done; and never will it be concealed from them that there is no longer the least hope of remedy. They will call to mind the lights which they received from God, his many loving calls, his offers of pardon, all despised; and they will see that all is now at an end, and that nothing remains for them, but to suffer and to despair for all eternity. O Jesus, thy blood, thy sufferings and death are my trust and hope. Alas! suffer me not to fall into hell, there to curse for ever even the blessings which thou hast bestowed upon me.

II. The souls in hell will be tormented in their *understandings*, by thinking continually of heaven, which they have wilfully lost through their own fault. The immense felicity enjoyed by the blessed in the abode of delights, will be for ever before their eyes; and this will render their life of dreadful suffering, which they must drag on for ever in the prison of despair and woe, still more tormenting. Had I then died, my Redeemer, when I was in sin, I should now have had no hope of ever enjoying thee in heaven! Thou gavest me life that I might gain heaven, and how have I lost heaven for something worse than nothing, by losing thy grace! I love thee, O God, and I am sorry for having offended thee, and I hope, through the merits of thy passion, to come to love thee for ever in heaven.

III. The souls in hell will be tormented in their *wills*, by being denied every thing which they desire, and by having every punishment inflicted upon them which they do not desire. They will never have any thing which they wish for, but every thing which they abhor. They will long to rid themselves of their torments and to find peace; but there will be no peace for them, they will be forced to dwell in the midst of their torments for

ever. Their perverse will by hating God when they know him to be the supreme good, and worthy of infinite love, will become their greatest torment. So it is, my God ; thou art an infinite good and worthy of infinite love, and I have exchanged thee for nothing ! Oh that I had died and had not offered thee so grievous an injury ! I love thee, my sovereign good. Have pity on me and suffer me not to be again ungrateful to thee. I renounce all the delights of this world, and embrace thee as my only good. I will be for ever thine, be thou for ever mine. This is my hope, my God, my love, and my all. *Deus meus et omnia.* O Mary, thou art all-powerful with God ; obtain for me the grace of leading a holy life.

Meditation Fifteenth.

On devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

I. JESUS is the mediator of justice, Mary obtains for us grace ; for as St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, St. Bernardin of Sienna, St. Germanus, St. Antoninus and others say, it is the will of God to dispense, through the hands of Mary, whatever graces he is pleased to bestow upon us. With God the prayers of the saints are the prayers of his friends, but the prayers of Mary are the prayers of his mother. Happy they who confidently and at all times have recourse to this divine mother ! This of all others is the most pleasing devotion to the Blessed Virgin, ever to have recourse to her and to say : O Mary, intercede for me with your Son Jesus.

II. Jesus is omnipotent by nature; Mary is very powerful by grace; she obtains whatever she asks

for. It is impossible, says St. Antoninus, that this mother should ask any favour of her Son for those who are devout to her, and the Son not grant her request. Jesus delights to honour his mother by granting whatever she asks of him. Hence St. Bernard exhorts us to seek for grace, and to seek for it through Mary: because she is a mother who cannot be denied. If then we would be saved, let us recommend ourselves to Mary, that she may intercede for us, because her prayers are always heard. O mother of mercy, have pity on me. You are styled the advocate of sinners, assist me, therefore, a sinner placing my confidence in you.

III. Let us not doubt whether Mary will hear us when we address our prayers to her. It is her delight to exercise her powerful influence with God in obtaining for us whatever graces we stand in need of. It is sufficient to ask favours of Mary to obtain them. If we are unworthy of them, she renders us worthy, by her powerful intercession; and she is very desirous that we should have recourse to her, that she may save us. What sinner ever perished, who, with confidence and perseverance, had recourse to Mary, the refuge of sinners? He is lost who has not recourse to Mary. O Mary, my mother and my hope, I take refuge under your protection; reject me not as I have deserved. Protect me and have pity on me, a miserable sinner. Obtain for me the forgiveness of my sins; obtain for me holy perseverance, the love of God, a good death, and a happy eternity. I hope all things of you, because you are most powerful with God. Make me holy, since you have it in your power to do so, by your holy intercession. O Mary, in you do I confide, in you do I place all my hopes, next to your divine Son Jesus.

Meditation Sixteenth.

On Jesus suffering for our sins.

I. SEEING men lost in their sins, God was pleased to take pity on them; but his divine justice required satisfaction, and there was no one capable of making adequate satisfaction. On this account he sent his own Son, made man, into the world, and loaded him with all our offences: *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.* Isa. liii. 6: so that he might pay our debt, satisfy divine justice, and save mankind. O eternal God, what more couldst thou have done to induce us to confide in thy mercy, and to attract our hearts to thy love, than give us even thy own Son? But how could I, after all that thou hast done for me, have been guilty of so many offences against thee? O my God, for the love of this thy Son, have pity on me. I am sorry above every evil for having offended thee. And though I have grievously offended thee, I desire to love thee with the greatest fervour; give me strength so to love thee.

II. The eternal Father having loaded his Son with all our crimes, was not content even with such satisfaction from him, as would have amply atoned for us all, but, as Isaias continues, *The Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity.* v. 10. He would have him mangled to exhaustion, with scourges, thorns, nails, and torments, until he died of tortures on an infamous gibbet. If faith, O God, did not assure us of this excess of thy love towards men, who could possibly believe it? O God, worthy of all love, permit us not to be any more ungrateful to thee. Enlighten and strengthen us to correspond with such immense love during the remainder of our lives; do this, we beseech thee, for the love of this thy Son, whom thou hast given to us.

III. Behold that innocent Son, attentive to the will of his Father, who would have him thus sacrificed for our sins, full of humility before his Father, full of love towards us, obediently embraces his life of pain and his bitter death: *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.* Phil. ii. 8. Dearest Saviour, I will therefore say to thee with the penitent Ezechias: *Thou hast delivered my soul that it should not perish, thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.* Isa. xxxviii. 17. I had deserved by my sins to be cast into hell, but thou hast delivered me from it, and, as I hope, pardoned me. I had offended thy divine majesty, and thou hast loaded thyself with my crimes, and hast suffered for me. After this, if I should again offend thee, or if I should not love thee with my whole heart, what punishment will ever be sufficient for my chastisement? Beloved Jesus, O love of my soul, I am exceedingly sorry for having so grievously offended thee. I give thee my whole self; accept of me, and suffer me not to be any more separated from thee. Holy virgin, Mary, mother, pray to your divine Son for me, that he may be pleased to accept of me, and make me all his own.

Meditation Seventeenth.

On the one thing necessary.

I. *ONE thing is necessary*, the salvation of our souls. It is not necessary to be great, noble, or rich in this world, or to enjoy uninterrupted health; but it is necessary to save our souls. For this has God placed us here: not to acquire honours, riches, or pleasures, but to acquire by our good works that

eternal kingdom which is prepared for those, who, during this present life, fight against and overcome the enemies of their eternal salvation. Ah! my Jesus, how often have I renounced heaven, by renouncing thy grace! But, O Lord, I am more grieved for having forfeited thy friendship, than for having lost heaven. Give me, O Jesus, a great sorrow for my sins, and mercifully pardon me.

II. Of what consequence is it if a man be poor, mean, infirm, and despised in this life, provided that in the end he dies in the grace of God and secures his salvation? The more he has been afflicted with tribulations, if he have suffered them with patience, the more will he be glorified in the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, what does it profit a man to abound in riches and honours, if, when he dies, he is lost for ever? If we are lost, all the goods we have enjoyed in this world will be remembered only to increase our misery for eternity. Do thou, my God, enlighten me: give me to understand that my only evil is to offend thee, and my only good to love thee. Enable me to spend the remainder of my days in serving thee.

III. Salvation is necessary, because there is no medium: we must either be saved or lost. It will not do to say: I shall be satisfied with not going to hell, I shall not be concerned at being deprived of heaven. No: either heaven or hell; either for ever happy with God in heaven in an ocean of delights, or for ever trampled upon by devils in hell in an ocean of fire and torments: either saved, or lost; there is no other alternative. O Jesus, I have hitherto chosen hell, and for years past I should have been suffering there, if in pity thou hadst not borne with me. I thank thee, O my Saviour, and I am sorry above every evil for having offended thee. I hope, for the future, with the assistance of thy grace, to walk no more in the way which conducts

to hell. I love thee, O my sovereign good, and I desire to love thee for ever. Grant me perseverance in good, and save me through that blood which thou hast shed for me. O Mary, my hope, intercede for me.

Meditation Eighteenth.

On the sinner's disobedience to God.

I. PHARAOH, when Moses announced to him the orders of God for the liberation of the Hebrews, insolently answered: *Who is the Lord, that I should hear his word? I know not the Lord.* Exod. v. 2. It is thus that the sinner replies to his own conscience when it intimates to him the divine precepts, which forbid him to do that which is evil: "I know not God: I know that he is my Lord, but I will not obey him." Thus have I too often addressed thee, O God, when I have committed sin. If thou hadst not died for me, O my Redeemer, I should not dare to crave thy pardon; but thou hast offered me thy pardon from the cross, if I be desirous of availing myself of it. I do indeed desire it; I am sorry for having despised thee, my sovereign good. I will rather die than offend thee any more.

II. *Thou hast broken my yoke; thou saidst, I will not serve.* Jer. ii. 20. The sinner, when tempted to commit sin, hears indeed the voice of God, saying to him: My son, do not revenge thyself, do not gratify thyself with that infamous pleasure, relinquish the possession of that which is not thine. But by yielding to sin, he replies: "Lord, I will not serve thee. Thou desirest that I should not commit this sin, but I will commit it." My Lord,

and my God, how frequently have I, not by my words, but by my deeds, and my will, thus daringly replied to thee! Alas! cast me not away from thy face. I am now sensible of the wrong I have done thee in parting with thy graces for the gratification of my own wretched desires. O that I had died rather than ever offended thee!

III. God is the Lord of all things, because he has created all. *All things are in thy power, because thou hast made heaven and earth, and all things that are under the cope of heaven.* *Esther* xiii. 9, 10. All creatures obey God; the heavens, the earth, the sea, the elements, the brute creation: while man, although he has been gifted and loved by God above all other creatures, obeys him not! and is heedless of the loss of his grace! I give thee thanks, O God, for having waited for me. What would have become of me, had I died in one of those nights in which I went to rest under thy displeasure? But as thou hast patiently waited for me, it is a sign that thou art desirous of pardoning me. Pardon me, then, O Jesus. I am sorry above every evil for having ever lost the respect which is due to thee. But then I did not love thee; now I do love thee more than myself, and I am ready to die a thousand times rather than again forfeit thy grace and friendship. Thou hast said that thou lovest those who love thee. I love thee, do thou love me in return, and give me grace to live and die in thy love, that so I may love thee for ever. Mary, my refuge, through you do I hope to remain faithful to God until the hour of my death.

Meditation Nineteenth.

On the merciful chastisements of God.

I. GOD, being infinite goodness, desires only our good and to communicate to us his own happiness. When he chastises us, it is because we have obliged him to do so by our sins. Hence the prophet Isaías says, that, on such occasions, he doth *a work foreign to his desires.* xxviii. 21. Hence it is that it is said, that it is the property of God to have mercy and to spare, to dispense his favours and to make all happy. O God, it is this thy infinite goodness which sinners offend and despise, when they provoke thee to chastise them. Wretch that I am, how often have I offended thy infinite goodness!

II. Let us therefore understand that when God threatens us, it is not because he desires to punish us, but because he wishes to deliver us from punishment; he threatens, because he would have compassion on us. *O God thou hast been angry, and hast had mercy on us.* Ps. lix. 3. But how is this? he is angry with us, and treats us with mercy? Yes! He shows himself angry towards us, in order that we may amend our lives, and that thus he may be able to pardon and save us; hence, if in this life he chastise us for our sins, he does so in his mercy, for by so doing he frees us from eternal woe. How unfortunate then is the sinner who escapes punishment in this life! Since then, O God, I have so much offended thee, chastise me in this life, that thou mayest spare me in the next. I know that I have certainly deserved hell; I accept all kinds of pain, that thou mayest reinstate me in thy grace and deliver me from hell, where I should be for ever separated from thee. Enlighten and

strengthen me to overcome every obstacle to thy favour.

III. He who makes no account of the divine threats, ought much to fear lest the chastisement threatened in the Proverbs should suddenly overtake him : *The man that with a stiff neck despiseth him that reproveth him, shall suddenly be destroyed ; and health shall not follow him.* xxix. 1. A sudden death shall overtake him that despises God's reprobations, and he shall have no time to avoid eternal destruction. This, O Jesus, has happened to many, and I indeed have deserved that the like should happen to me ; but, O my Redeemer, thou hast shown that mercy towards me which thou hast not shown to many others who have offended thee less frequently than I have done, and who are now suffering in hell without the least hope of ever again being able to regain thy favour. I know, O Lord, that thou desirest my salvation, and I also desire it, that I may please thee. I renounce all, and turn myself to thee, who art my God, and my only good. I believe in thee, I hope in thee, I love thee, and thee alone. O infinite goodness, I am exceedingly displeased with myself for having hitherto done evil against thee ; and I wish that I had suffered every evil, rather than offended thee. Suffer me not any more to depart from thee, rather let me die than offer thee so great an injury. In thee, my crucified Jesus, do I place all my hopes. O Mary, mother of Jesus, recommend me to your Son.

Meditation Twentieth.

On the patience of God with sinners.

I. THE more we have experienced the patient mercies of God, the more we ought to be afraid of continuing to abuse them, lest the time of God's vengeance overtake us. *Revenge is mine, and I will repay in due time.* Deut. xxxiii. 35. God will put an end to his forbearance towards those who will not cease to abuse it. I give thee thanks, O Lord, for having patiently borne with me, though I have so often betrayed thee. Make me sensible of the evil which I have done by abusing thy patience for so long a time; make me sorry for all the offences I have committed against thee. No, I will never more abuse thy tender mercy.

II. *Commit this sin; you can afterwards confess it.* Such is the artifice with which the devil has drawn many souls into hell. Many Christians, now in hell, have been lost by this delusion. *The Lord waiteth that he may have mercy on you.* Isa. xxx. 18. God waiteth for the sinner, that the sinner may be converted, and obtain mercy; but when God sees that the time which he allows the sinner for doing penance, is employed only in increasing the number of his offences, then he waits no longer, but punishes him as he deserves. Pardon me, O God, for I desire never more to offend thee. And why should I delay? that thou mayest condemn me to hell? I fear indeed that now thou canst no longer have patience with me I have indeed offended thee too grievously. I am sorry for it, I repent of it. I hope for forgiveness through the merits of that blood which thou hast shed for me.

III. *The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed; because his commiserations have not failed.*

Lam. iii. 22. Thus should he exclaim who finds to his confusion that he has frequently offended God. He should be most grateful to God for not having suffered him to die in his sins, and be most careful not to offend him again; otherwise the Lord will reproach him, saying: *What more could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done?* God will say to him: Ungrateful soul! if thou hadst committed the same offences against man, who is viler than the earth, verily he would not have borne with thee. And how great mercies have I exercised towards thee! How many times have I called thee, and enlightened thee, and pardoned thee? The time of punishment is at hand; the time of forgiveness is past. Thus has God spoken to many who are now suffering in hell; where one of their greatest torments is the remembrance of the mercies which they formerly received from God. Jesus, my Redeemer, and my Judge, I also have deserved to hear the same from thy mouth; but I hear thee now again calling me to pardon: *Be converted to the Lord thy God.* O accursed sin, which has made me lose my God, how much do I abhor and detest thee! I turn my whole self towards thee, my Lord and my God. My sovereign good, I love thee; and because I love thee I repent with my whole soul for having, during the time that is past, so much despised thee. My God, I desire never more to offend thee: give me thy love, grant me perseverance. Mary, my refuge, succour and help me.

Meditation Twenty-first.

On Death, as the passage to Eternity.

I. IT is of faith that my soul is immortal, and that one day, when I least think of it, I must leave this world. I ought therefore to make a provision for myself, which will not fail with this life, but will be eternal, even as I am eternal. Great things were done here, in their life time, by an Alexander, or a Cæsar; but, for how many ages past have their glories ceased! and where are they now? O my God, that I had always loved thee! What now remains for me, after so many years spent in sin, but trouble and remorse of conscience? But since thou dost allow me time to repair the evil which I have done, behold me, Lord, ready to perform whatever thou requirest of me, whatever thou pleasest. I will spend the remainder of my days in bewailing my ungrateful conduct towards thee, and in loving thee with all my power, my God and my all, my only good.

II. What will it avail me to have been happy in this world (if indeed true happiness can be attained without God), if hereafter I should be miserable for all eternity? But what folly it is, to know that I must die, and that an eternity either of happiness or misery awaits me after death, and that upon dying ill or well depends my being miserable or happy for ever, and yet, not to adopt every means in my power to secure a good death! Holy Spirit, enlighten and strengthen me to live always in thy grace, until the hour of my departure. O infinite goodness, I am sensible of the evil which I have done by offending thee, and I detest it: I know that thou alone art worthy of being loved, and I love thee above all things.

III. In a word, all the good things of this life must end at our burial and be left, while we are mouldering in our graves. The shadow of death will cover and obscure all the grandeur and splendour of this world. He only, then, can be called happy, who serves God in this world, and by loving and serving him acquires eternal happiness. O Jesus, I am truly sorry for having hitherto made so little account of thy love. Now I love thee above all things, and I desire nothing else but to love thee. From henceforth thou only shalt be the sole object of my love, thou only shalt be my all; and this is the only inheritance I ask of thee: to love thee always, both in this life and in the next. For the merits of thy bitter passion, give me perseverance in all virtues. Mary, mother of God, thou art my hope.

Meditation Twenty-second.

On reforming our lives before death.

I. EVERY one desires to die the death of the saints; but it is scarcely possible for the Christian to make a holy end, who has led a disorderly life until the time of his death; to die united to God, after having always lived at a distance from him. The saints, in order to secure a happy death, renounced all the riches, the delights, and all the hopes which this world held out to them, and embraced poor and mortified lives. They buried themselves alive in this world, to avoid, when dead, being buried for ever in hell. O God, for how many years past have I deserved to be buried in that place of torments, without hope of pardon, or of being able to love thee! But thou hast waited

in order to pardon me. Truly, then, am I sorry from the bottom of my heart for having offended thee, my sovereign good; have pity on me, and do not permit me to offend thee any more.

II. God forewarns sinners that they will seek him in death and will not find him: *You shall seek and shall not find me.* They shall not find him because they will not then seek him through love, but only through the fear of hell; they will seek God without renouncing their affection for sin; and hence they shall not find him. No, my God, I will not wait to seek thee in death, but will seek and desire thee from this moment. I am sorry for having hitherto given thee so much displeasure by seeking to gratify my own inclinations. I am sorry for it, I confess that I have done evil. But thou willest not that the heart that seeks thee should despair, but rejoice: *Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.* Ps. civ. 3. Yes, O Lord, I seek thee and I love thee more than myself.

III. How miserable is the Christian who, before his death, has not spent a good part of his life in bewailing his sins! It is not to be denied that such a man may be converted at his death and obtain salvation; but the mind obscured, the heart hardened, the bad habits formed, the passions predominant, render it morally impossible for him to die happily. An extraordinary grace will be necessary for him; but does God reserve such a grace to bestow it upon one who has continued ungrateful to him even until the moment of death? O God, to what straits are sinners reduced to escape eternal destruction. No, my God, I will not wait until death to repent of my sins and to love thee. I am sorry now for having offended thee; now do I love thee with my whole heart. Suffer me not any more to turn my back upon thee, rather let me die. O holy mother, Mary, obtain for me perseverance in virtue.

Meditation Twenty-third.

On the Lamb of God sacrificed for our sins.

I. **BEHOLD the Lamb of God:** thus did the Baptist speak of our Blessed Redeemer, who offered his blood and even his life in sacrifice to obtain our pardon and our eternal salvation. Behold him in the hall of Pilate; as an innocent lamb he permits himself to be shorn, not of wool, but of his sacred flesh, with thorns and scourges. *He shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth.* Isa. liii. 7. He opens not his mouth, nor does he complain, because he desires to suffer himself the punishments due to our sins. May the angels and all creatures bless thee, O Saviour of the world, for the great mercy and love which thou hast shown towards us. We had committed sins, and thou didst make satisfaction for them!

II. Behold him, bound like a malefactor and surrounded by executioners, conducted to Calvary, there to become the victim of the great sacrifice, by which the work of our redemption is to be accomplished: *I was as a meek lamb, that is carried to be a victim.* Jer. xi. 19. Whither, O Jesus, do the people conduct thee, loaded with such a cross, after having so cruelly tormented thee? Thou answerest me: they conduct me to death, and I go willingly, because I am going to save thee, and to prove how great my love is towards thee. And how, O my Saviour, have I proved my love towards thee? Thou indeed knowest; by injuries and grievous offences, and by my frequent contempt of thy grace and love. But thy death is my hope. I am sorry, O thou love of my soul, for having offended thee; I am sorry, and will love thee with my whole heart.

III. St. Francis of Assisium, seeing a lamb led to the slaughter, could not refrain from tears, saying, *As this lamb is led to the slaughter, so was my innocent Lord conducted for me to the death of the cross.* Since then, O Jesus, thou dost not refuse to go to sacrifice thy life for the love of me, shall I refuse to give my whole self for the love of thee? This thou requirest of me: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.* This and this only do I desire: to love thee, and to love thee with my whole heart. Thou hast loved me without any reserve, and so will I love thee. I am sorry for having offended thee, O Lamb of God, and I give my whole self to thee. Accept of me, O Jesus, and make me faithful to thy grace. O Mary, mother of my Redeemer, make me by your prayers entirely his.

Meditation Twenty-fourth.

On the value of time.

I. TIME is a treasure of inestimable value, because in every moment of time we may gain an increase of grace and eternal glory. In hell the lost souls are tormented with the thought, and bitterly lament that now there is no more time for them, in which to rescue themselves by repentance from eternal misery. What would they give but for one hour of time to save themselves by an act of true sorrow from destruction! In heaven there is no grief; but if the blessed could grieve, they would do so for having lost so much time during life, in which they might have acquired greater glory, and because time is now no longer theirs. I give thee thanks, O God, for giving me time to bewail my sins, and to make amends by my love for the offences I have committed against thee.

II. Nothing is so precious as time; and yet how comes it that nothing is so little valued? Men will spend hours in jesting, or standing at a window or in the middle of a road, to see what passes: and if you ask them what they are doing? they will tell you they are passing away time. O time, now so much despised! thou wilt be of all things else the most valued by such persons, when death shall have surprised them. What will they not then be willing to give for one hour of so much lost time! But time will remain no longer for them, when it shall be said to each one of them: *Go forth, Christian soul, out of this world*: hasten to be gone, for now there is no more time for thee. How will they then exclaim, lamenting: Alas! I have squandered away my whole life; during so many years I might have become a saint; but how far am I from being such; and how shall I become such, now that there is no more time for me! But to what purpose will such lamentations be, when the dying man shall be on the verge of that moment on which will depend eternity?

III. *Walk whilst you have the light*, John xii. 35. The time of death is the time of night, when nothing can any longer be seen, nor any thing more be accomplished. *The night cometh, in which no man can work*. Hence the Holy Spirit admonishes us to walk in the way of the Lord, whilst we have the light and the day before us. Can we reflect that the time is near approaching, in which the cause of our eternal salvation is to be decided, and still squander away our time? Let us not delay, but immediately put our accounts in order, because when we least think of it, Jesus Christ will come to judge us. *At what hour ye think not, the Son of Man will come*. Hasten then, my Jesus, hasten to pardon me. And shall I delay? shall I delay until I am cast into that eternal prison, where with

the rest of the condemned souls, I must for ever lament, saying: *The summer is past and we are not saved?* No, my Lord, I will no longer resist thy loving invitations. Who knows but that this meditation which I am now reading may be the last I shall ever cast my eyes upon! I am sorry for having offended thee, O sovereign good; to thee do I consecrate the remainder of my days, and beseech thee to grant me holy perseverance. I desire never more to offend thee, but for ever to love thee. O Mary, refuge of sinners, in you do I place my confidence.

Meditation Twenty-fifth.

On the terrors of the dying man at the thought of approaching judgment.

I. CONSIDER the fear which the thought of judgment will cause in the mind of a dying man, when he shall reflect, that in a very short time he must present himself before Jesus Christ, his judge, to render an account of all the actions of his past life. When the awful moment of his passage out of this world into another, out of time into eternity, shall arrive, then will there be nothing so tormenting to him as the sight of his sins. St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, being ill, and thinking of judgment, trembled. Her confessor told her not to fear. *Ah father*, she replied, *it is an awful thing to appear before Jesus Christ, as our judge.* Such were the sensations of this holy virgin, who was a saint from her infancy. What shall he say who has frequently deserved hell?

II. The abbott Agatho, after many years of penance, trembled, saying: *What will become of me,*

when I shall be judged? And how should he not tremble who has offended God by many mortal sins, and yet has done no penance for them? At death, the sight of his crimes, the rigour of the divine judgments, the uncertainty of the sentence to be pronounced upon him, what a tempest of horror and confusion will these raise around him! Let us be careful to throw ourselves at the feet of Jesus Christ, and secure our pardon before the arrival of our accounting day. Ah! my Jesus and my Redeemer, who wilt one day be my judge, have pity on me before the day of justice. Behold at thy feet, a deserter, who has often promised to be faithful to thee, and has as often again turned his back upon thee. No, my God, thou hast not deserved the treatment which thou hast hitherto received at my hands. Forgive me, O Lord, for I desire truly to change and amend my life. I am sorry, my sovereign good, for having despised thee: take pity on me.

III. Then will be decided the great affair of our eternal salvation. Upon this decision will depend our being either saved or lost for ever, our being happy or miserable for all eternity. But, O God! each one knows this and says: *so it is.* But if it is so, why do we not leave all to attend only to our sanctification, and to the securing of our eternal salvation? My God, I give thee thanks for the light which thou hast given me. Remember, O Jesus, that thou didst die for my salvation; grant that when I first behold thee, I may see thee appeased. If hitherto I have despised thy grace, I now esteem it above every other good. I love thee, O infinite goodness, and because I love thee, I am sorry for having offended thee. Hitherto I have forsaken thee, but now I desire thee and seek thee: grant that I may find thee, O God of my soul. Mary, my mother, recommend me to your Son Jesus.

Meditation Twenty-sixth.

On the fire of hell.

I. IT is certain that hell is a pit of fire, in which the miserable souls of the wicked will be tormented for ever. Even in this life the pain of burning is of all others the most intense and dreadful: but the fire of hell has the power of inflicting much more excruciating torment, because it has been created by God, to be the instrument of his wrath upon his rebellious creatures. *Go ye cursed, into everlasting fire,* is the sentence of the reprobate. And as in this sentence of condemnation fire is particularly mentioned, we may conclude that, of all the torménts with which the senses of the wicked are afflicted, fire is the greatest. Ah! my God, for how many years past have I deserved to burn in this fire! but thou hast waited for me, to behold me burning, not with this dreadful fire, but with the blessed flames of thy holy love. Wherefore do I love thee, my sovereign good, and desire to love thee for ever.

II. In this world fire only burns outwardly, and does not penetrate our interior; but in hell the fire enters into the inmost recesses of its victims. *Thou shalt make them as an oven of fire.* Ps. xx. 10. Every one shall become as a furnace of fire, so that the heart shall burn within the chest, the bowels within the carcass, the brains within the skull, and even the marrow within the bones. Sinners, what are your feelings with regard to this fire? You, who cannot now bear a spark accidentally fallen from a candle, nor a house too hot, nor a ray of the sun upon your head, how will you endure to be permanently immersed in an ocean of fire, where you will be for ever dying, and yet never

never die? O my Redeemer! let not that blood which thou didst shed for the love of me, be shed for me in vain. Grant me sorrow for my sins, grant me thy holy love.

III. *Which of you, saith the prophet, can dwell with devouring fire.* Isa. xxxiii. 14. As a wild beast devoureth its prey, so shall the fire of hell continually devour the unhappy soul, but without ever depriving him of life. Hence, St Peter Damian exclaims; *Go on, sinner, go on, unchaste one, give thy flesh its desires; a day shall come when thy impurities shall be to thee as pitch within thy bowels, to nourish the fire which shall consume thee in hell for all eternity.* Epist. 6. O my God, whom I have despised and lost, forgive me, and suffer me not to lose thee any more. I am sorry above every evil for having offended thee. Receive me into thy favour, for now do I promise thee that I will love thee, and love no other but thee. Most holy Mary, deliver me by your holy intercession, from ever suffering the torments of hell.

Meditation Twenty-seventh.

On the vanity of all worldly things.

I. WHAT is life but a vapour, which appears for a short time and then is seen no more? *What is your life?* says St. James, *It is a vapour which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away.* iv. 15. The vapours which arise from the earth, when raised into the air and surrounded by the rays of the sun appear brilliant and beautiful; but the least wind disperses them and they are seen no more. Such is the grandeur of this world. Behold that prince; to-day, he is feared, attended

upon and honoured by thousands; to-morrow, he will be dead, despised and hated by all. In a word, honours, pleasures, and riches, must all end in death. O my God! make me sensible of the immensity of thy goodness, that I may love nothing but thee.

II. Death deprives man of whatever he may possess in this world. What a sad sight, to behold a rich man, after death, carried out of his palace, to return thither no more! how sad, to behold others taking possession of the estates which he has left, of his wealth, and of whatever else he so lately enjoyed! His servants, after having accompanied him to his grave, abandon him, and leave him there, to be devoured by worms; no one esteeming him, no one flattering him. Formerly every one obeyed his nod, but now no one takes the least notice of his orders. How wretched have I been, O Lord, in having, for so many years, gone after the vanities of the world, and left thee, my sovereign good! But from this day forward, I desire to possess thee as my only treasure, as the only love of my soul.

III. *Dust and ashes, why are you proud?* Man, says the Almighty, seest thou not that in a short time thou wilt become dust and ashes? and on what dost thou fix thy thoughts and affections? Reflect that death will soon rob thee of every thing, and separate thee from the whole world. And if, when thou givest in thy accounts, thou be found wanting, what will become of thee for eternity? I give thee thanks, my Lord and my God. Thou speakest thus to me, because thou desirest to save me. Let thy mercies now prevail. Thou hast promised to pardon such as repent of their offences against thee. From the bottom of my heart do I repent, grant me therefore pardon. Thou hast promised to love those who love thee: above all things

do I now love thee; wherefore do thou love me also, and hate me not any more, as I have deserved. O Mary, my advocate, in your protection is my hope.

Meditation Twenty-eighth.

On the number of our sins.

I. IT is the opinion of St. Basil, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, St. Augustin, and others, that as God has determined for each one the number of talents, the goods of fortune, and the number of days to be bestowed upon him, so, he has also determined for each one the number of sins to be pardoned him, which being completed, God will pour out his chastisements upon him and pardon him no more. Each one, says St. Augustin, is patiently borne with by Almighty God for a certain time; but when this is over, there is then no longer any more pardon for him. I am aware, O God, that I have hitherto abused thy patience too much; but I know that thou hast not yet abandoned me, because I am sorry for my sins, and this sorrow is a sign that thou still lovest me. O my God, I desire never more to displease thee; for pity do not abandon me.

II. *The Lord patiently expecteth, that when the day of judgment shall come, he may punish them in the fullness of their sins.* 2 Macb. vi. 14. Although God has patience and waits for the sinner, yet, when the day shall arrive for the measure of his sins to be filled up, he will wait for him no longer, but chastise him. O Lord, wait yet for me a little while, do not yet abandon me, I hope, with the assistance of thy grace, never to offend thee more, nor to excite thy anger against me, I am sorry,

O my sovereign good, for having offended thee, and I protest that I will never more betray thee. I now esteem thy friendship more than all the goods of the whole world.

III. We commit sins, and we take no notice of the load of guilt which we are accumulating; but let us tremble lest, what happened to the king Baltassar, befall us also: *Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting. Dan. v. 27.* The devil may tell thee, that it matters not whether it be ten or eleven sins. But no, that wicked enemy deceives thee; the sin which he is tempting thee to commit, will increase the load of thy guilt, it may decide the balance of divine justice against thee, and thou mayest be condemned for it to the torments of hell. If, Christian brother, thou live not in fear lest God should not show thee mercy, shouldst thou add one more mortal sin to those which thou hast already committed, if thou tremble not at the thought of this, thou art in great danger of being lost. No, my God; thou hast borne with me too long, I will never more abuse thy bountiful goodness. I thank thee for having waited for me until now. I have forfeited thy love too often; but I hope never more to lose thee. Since thou hast not yet abandoned me, enable me to find thee again. I love thee, O my God, and I am sorry from the bottom of my heart for having ever turned my back upon thee. No, I desire never more to lose thee. Assist me with thy grace. And you, my queen and my mother, Mary, help me by your holy intercession.

Meditation Twenty-ninth.

On the folly of living enemies of God.

I. SINNERS call the saints, who, in this life, fly from honours, riches, and the pleasures of sense, and embrace poverty, contempt and mortification, fools. But, at the day of final retribution, they shall confess that themselves have been fools, in judging the lives of the saints to be folly: *We fools esteemed their life madness. Wis. v. 4.* And what greater folly can there be than to live without God? which is to live a miserable life in this world, to be succeeded by a still more miserable one in hell. No, I will not wait till the last day to confess my folly; I now confess it: how great has it been in offending thee, my sovereign good! *Father, I am not worthy to be called thy son.* Father, I am not worthy to receive thy forgiveness, but I hope for it through the blood which thou hast shed for my sake. My Jesus, I am sorry for having despised thee, I love thee above all things.

II. Unhappy sinners; blinded by their sins, they lose all judgment. What would be said of a man who should sell a kingdom for the smallest coin? And what should be said of him who, for a momentary pleasure, a vapour, a caprice, sells heaven and the grace of God? They think only of this life, which will shortly end, and in the mean time deserve hell for that life which will never end. O my God, permit me not to become any more so blind as to prefer, as I have hitherto done, my own unlawful gratifications before thee, and for the sake of them to despise thee, my sovereign good! I now detest them, and love thee above all things.

III. Miserable worldlings! the time will come,

when they will bewail their folly; but when? when there shall be no longer any thing to prevent their eternal ruin. Then shall they say: *What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow* *Wis. v. 8, 9.* Behold, they will exclaim, how all our delights have passed away like a shadow, and nothing remains to us now, but suffering and eternal lamentation. Dear Jesus, have pity on me. I had forgotten thee, but thou didst not forget me. I love thee, with my whole soul, and I detest above all evil, whatever sins I have committed against thee. Pardon me, O God, and remember not my offences against thee. And since thou knowest my weakness, do not abandon me; give me strength to overcome all things to please thee. O Mary, mother of God, in you do I place my hopes.

Meditation Thirtieth.

On the sacred wounds of Jesus.

I. ST. BONAVENTURE says, that the wounds of Jesus wound the hardest hearts, and inflame the coldest souls. And in truth, how can we believe that God permitted himself to be buffeted, scourged, crowned with thorns, and finally put to death for the love of us, and yet not love him? St. Francis of Assisium frequently bewailed the ingratitude of men, as he passed along the country, saying: *Love is not loved, love is not loved!* Behold, O my Jesus, I am one of those who are thus ungrateful, who have been so many years in the world and have not loved thee. And shall I, my Redeemer, remain for ever such? No, I will love thee until death

and will give myself wholly to thee; mercifully accept of me and help me.

II. The church, when she shows us Jesus Christ crucified, exclaims: *His whole figure breathes forth love; his head bowed down, his arms extended, his side opened.* She cries out: Behold, O man, behold thy God, who has died for thy love; see how his arms are extended to embrace thee, his head bowed down to give thee the kiss of peace, his side opened to give thee access to his heart, if thou wilt but love him. Assuredly I will love thee, my treasure, my love, and my all. And whom shall I love, if I love not God who has died for me?

III. *The charity of Christ*, saith the Apostle, *presseth us.* 2 Cor. v. 14. Ah! my Redeemer, thou hast died for the love of men; yet men do not love thee, because they live unmindful of the death which thou hast suffered for them. Did they bear it in mind, how could they live without loving thee? *Knowing*, says St. Francis of Sales, *that Jesus being really God, has so loved us as to suffer the death of the cross for us, do we not on this account, feel our hearts as it were in a press, in which they are forcibly held, and love expressed from them by a kind of violence, which is the more powerful as it is the more amiable?* And this is what St. Paul says in these words: *The charity of Christ presseth us;* the love of Jesus Christ forces us to love him. Ah! my beloved Saviour, heretofore I have despised thee, but now I esteem and love thee more than my own life, nothing afflicts me so much as the remembrance of the many offences I have committed against thee. Pardon me, O Jesus, and draw my whole heart to thyself, that so, I may neither desire, nor seek, nor sigh after any other besides thee. O Mary, my mother, help me to love Jesus.

Meditation Thirty-first.

On the great affair of salvation.

I. THE affair of our eternal salvation is of all others the most important. But how comes it that men use all diligence to succeed in the affairs of this world, leave no means untried to obtain a desirable situation, to gain a law-suit, or to bring about a marriage, reject no counsels, neglect no measures by which to secure their object, neither eat nor sleep, and yet do nothing to gain eternal salvation,—nothing to gain it but every thing to forfeit it, as though hell, heaven and eternity were not articles of faith, but only fables and lies? O God, assist me by thy divine light; suffer me not to be any longer blinded, as I hitherto have been.

II. If an accident happen to a house, what is not immediately done to repair it? If a jewel be lost, what is not done to recover it? The soul is lost, the grace of God is lost, and men sleep and smile! We attend most carefully to our temporal welfare, and almost entirely neglect our eternal salvation! We call those happy who have renounced all things for God; why then are we so much attached to earthly things? O Jesus, thou hast so much desired my salvation as to shed thy blood and lay down thy life to secure it; and I have been so indifferent as to the preservation of thy grace as to renounce and forfeit it for a mere nothing! I am sorry, O Lord, for having thus dishonoured thee. I will renounce all things to attend only to thy love, my God, who art most worthy of all love.

III. The Son of God gives his life to save our souls; the devil is most diligent in his endeavours to bring them to eternal ruin: and do we take no care of them? St. Philip Neri convicts that man

of the height of folly who is inattentive to the salvation of his soul. Let us arouse our faith: it is certain that, after this short life, another life awaits us, which will be either eternally happy or eternally miserable. God has given us to choose which we will: *Before man is life and death.....that which he shall choose shall be given him. Eccl. xv. 18.* Ah! let us make such a choice now as we shall not have to repent of for all eternity. O God, make me sensible of the great wrong I have done thee in offending thee and renouncing thee for the love of creatures. I am sorry with my whole heart for having despised thee, my sovereign good; do not reject me now that I return to thee. I love thee above all things, and for the future I will lose all things rather than forfeit thy grace. Through the love which thou hast shown me in dying for me, succour me with thy help, and do not abandon me. O Mary, mother of God, be you my advocate.

Meditation Thirty-second.

On the frequent thought of death.

I. MEN who are attached to this world endeavour to banish the thoughts of death from their minds, as though, by avoiding the remembrance of death, they could avoid death itself. But no; by banishing the thoughts of death from their minds, they expose themselves to greater danger of making an evil end. There is no alternative: sooner or later we must die; and what is still more we can die but once; and if once we be lost, we shall be lost for ever. My God, I give thee thanks for having enlightened me. I have already lost too many years in offending thee; but I will now

spend the remainder of my life entirely in thy service. Command me what thou willest, for I desire to please thee in all things.

II. Holy anchorites, who formerly fled from the world into deserts in order to secure for themselves a happy death, took nothing with them but some spiritual book and a skull, by the sight of which they might continually keep up in their minds the remembrance of their last end. They meditated upon it, saying: *As the bones of him to whom this skull belonged, so will the bones of my body one day be: and my soul, who knows where that shall dwell?* And thus they endeavoured to gain not the goods of this life, but of that life which will never end. I give thee thanks, O Lord, for not having suffered me to die when I was in the state of sin. I am sorry for having offended thee, and hope, through thy precious blood, for mercy and pardon. I desire, O Jesus, to renounce all things, and to do my utmost to please thee.

III. A certain hermit, being at the point of death, was observed to smile, and being asked why he was so cheerful, answered: *I have always kept death before my eyes, and hence, now that it is come it does not alarm me.* The approach of death, therefore, is terrible to those only, who have thought of nothing but of gratifying themselves during their life time, and have never thought of their last end; but it is not terrible to those, who by frequently thinking upon it, have learnt to despise all earthly goods, and to love nothing but God. Oh! my Saviour, I perceive that death is already approaching towards me, and as yet I have done nothing for thee, who didst die for me. No, before death, I will, O God, love thee, who art worthy of infinite love. I have hitherto dishonoured thee by the offences which I have committed against thee; but I am sorry for them with my whole heart. For the

future I will honour thee, by loving thee to the utmost of my power. Give me light and strength to do so. Thou wouldest have me be wholly thine, and such do I desire to be. Help me by thy grace; in thee do I confide. And in you also do I confide, O Mary, my mother, and my hope.

Meditation Thirty-third.

On turning away from God by sin.

I. ST. AUGUSTIN and St. Thomas define mortal sin to be *a turning away from God*: that is, turning one's back upon God, leaving the Creator for the sake of the creature. What punishment would that subject deserve who, while his king was giving him a command, contemptuously turned his back upon him to go and transgress his orders? This is what the sinner does; and this is punished in hell with the pain of loss, that is, the loss of God, a punishment richly deserved by him who in this life turns his back upon his Sovereign good. Alas! my God, I have frequently turned my back upon thee; but I see that thou hast not yet abandoned me; I see that thou approachest me, and inviting me to repentance, dost offer me thy pardon. I am sorry above every evil for having offended thee, do thou have pity on me.

II. *Thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord, thou hast gone backward.* Jer. xv. 6. God complains and says: Ungrateful soul, thou hast forsaken me! I should never have forsaken thee, hadst not thou first turned thy back upon me: *thou hast gone backward.* O God, with what consternation will these words fill the soul of the sinner when he shall stand to be judged before thy divine tribunal! Thou mak-

est me hear them now, O my Saviour, not to condemn me, but to bring me to sorrow for the offences I have committed against thee. Yes, O Jesus, I sincerely repent of all the displeasure which I have given thee. For my own miserable gratifications I have forsaken thee, my God, my sovereign infinite good! But behold me a penitent returned to thee; and reject me not.

III. *Why will you die, O house of Israel? return ye and live.* Ez. xviii. 31, 32. I have died, says Jesus Christ, for the salvation of your souls, and why will you condemn them by your sins to eternal death? Return to me, and you shall recover the life of my grace. O Jesus, I should not dare to crave thy pardon, did I not know that thou hast died to obtain my forgiveness. Alas! how often have I despised thy grace and thy love! O that I had died rather than ever offered thee so great an injury! But thou, who didst come near to me even when I offended thee, wilt not now reject me, when I love thee and seek no other but thee. *My God and my all,* suffer me not any more to be ungrateful to thee. Mary, queen, and mother, obtain for me the grace of holy perseverance.

Meditation Thirty-fourth.

On the mercy of God in calling sinners to repentance.

I. *THE Lord called to Adam, and said to him: Where art thou?* Gen. iii. 10. These are the words of a father, says a pious author, going in quest of his lost son. O the immense compassion of our God! Adam sins, he turns his back upon God; and yet God does not abandon him, but follows him and calls after him: *Adam, where art thou?*

Thus, my soul, has God frequently done towards thee ; thou hadst forsaken him by sin ; but he did not hesitate to approach thee, and to call upon thee by many interior lights, by remorse of conscience, and by his holy inspirations ; all which were the effects of his compassion and love. O God of mercy, O God of love, how could I have so grievously offended thee, how could I have been so ungrateful to thee !

II. As a father when he beholds his son hastening to cast himself down from the brink of a precipice, presses forward towards him, and with tears endeavours to withhold him from destruction ; so, my God, hast thou done towards me. I was already hastening by my sins to precipitate myself into hell, and thou didst hold me back. I am now sensible, O Lord, of the love which thou hast shown me, and I hope to sing for ever in heaven the praises of thy mercy : *The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever. Ps. lxxxviii. 1.* I know, O Jesus, that thou desirest my salvation ; but I do not know whether thou hast yet pardoned me. Oh ! give me intense sorrow for my sins, give me an ardent love for thee, as signs of thy merciful forgiveness.

III. O, my Saviour, how can I doubt of receiving thy pardon, when thou thyself dost offer it to me, and art ready to receive me with open arms on my return to thee ? Wherefore I do return to thee, sorrowing and overpowered at the consideration that after all my offences against thee, thou indeed still lovest me. Oh ! that I had never displeased thee, my sovereign good ! how much am I grieved for having done so ! Pardon me, O Jesus, I will never more offend thee. But I shall not be able to rest satisfied with thy forgiveness only, give me also a great love for thee. Having so often deserved to burn in the fire of hell, I now desire to burn in the fire of thy holy love. I love thee, who

art my only love, my life, my treasure, my all. O Mary, my protectress, pray for me, that I may continue faithful to God until the end of my life.

Meditation Thirty-fifth.

On the soul's being presented before the tribunal of God.

I. WHEN criminals are presented before their judges, though they fear and tremble, yet flatter themselves that either their crimes will not be proved against them, or that their judges will remit in part the punishments which they have deserved. O God! how great will be the terror of a guilty soul when presented before Jesus Christ, from whom nothing will be hidden, and who will judge her with the utmost severity! *I am the judge and the witness, Jer. xxix. 23.*, will he then say to her: I am thy judge and I am witness of all the offences thou hast committed against me. O my Jesus, I deserved to hear this from thy mouth, had the hour of my judgment arrived. But now thou art pleased to assure me, that if I will repent of my sins, thou wilt no longer remember them: *I will not remember all his iniquities. Ez. xviii. 22.*

II. It is the opinion of divines, that in the same place in which the soul is separated from the body, she will be judged, and her lot decided either for eternal life or eternal death. But should the soul unhappily depart from the body in sin, what shall she be able to say when Jesus Christ shall remind her of his abused mercies, of the years he granted her, of the calls by which he invited her, and of the many other means which he afforded her of securing her salvation? Jesus my Redeemer, thou who condemnest obstinate sinners, dost not con-

damn those who love thee and who are sorry for having offended thee. I am a sinner, but I love thee more than myself, and I am sorry above every evil for having displeased thee; O, do thou pardon me before the time comes when thou wilt judge me.

III. *At what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come.* St. Luke xii. 40. When, therefore, O my Jesus and my judge, thou shalt judge me, after my death, thy wounds will be a terror to me, reproaching me with my ingratitude for the love which thou hast shown me in suffering and dying for me; but now they encourage me and give me confidence to hope for pardon from thee, my Redeemer, who, for the love of me and that thou mayest not have to condemn me, didst suffer thyself to be tormented and crucified. *We therefore pray thee, help thy servants whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.* O my Jesus! have pity on me, who am one of those sheep for whom thou didst shed thy sacred blood. If hitherto I have despised thee, I now esteem and love thee above all things. Make known to me the means by which I may be saved, and strengthen me to fulfil thy holy will. I will no longer abuse thy goodness. Thou hast placed me under too many obligations to thee, I will no longer suffer myself to live at a distance from thee and deprived of thy love. Mary, mother of mercy, have compassion on me.

Meditation Thirty-sixth.

On the unhappy life of the sinner.

I. *THERE is no peace for the wicked.* Is. xlvi. 22. The devil deceives poor sinners, by making them believe, that if they gratify their sensual de-

sires, revenge themselves, or take what belongs to another, they will gain satisfaction and obtain peace : but no, for the reverse will always be their portion ; the soul after sin becomes more than ever disquieted and afflicted. The brutes alone, who are created for the earth, can gain contentment from the enjoyments of the earth ; but man, who is created to enjoy God, cannot derive satisfaction from any or all of God's creatures ; his only source of happiness is God. O my God, what, of all the delights by which I have offended thee, now remains but bitterness and sorrow to torment me ? I do not regret the bitterness which they now cause me ; but only the displeasure which they have given thee, who hast so much loved me.

II. *The wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest.* Isa. lvii. 20. What is a soul in disgrace with God, but a tempestuous sea, always in agitation ? one wave rises and another succeeds, and all are waves of pain and anguish. No one in the world can have all things according to his will. He who loves God, when adversity comes, resigns himself to God's blessed will, and thus secures peace to his soul ; but how can the sinner, if he is an enemy of God, pacify himself by resignation to God's holy appointments ? Besides, sin always brings with it the dread of divine vengeance. *The wicked man fleeth, when no man pursueth.* Prov. xxviii. 1. Yes, for his own sin followeth after him, and by the remorse with which it preys upon his soul, makes him suffer an anticipated hell. O my Lord and my God, I am exceedingly sorry for having forsaken thee ; do thou forgive me and suffer me not to lose thee any more.

III. *Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the requests of thy heart.* Ps. xxxvi. 4. Man, whither goest thou in search of content ? seek after God, and he will satisfy all the desires of thy soul. *Seek,*

says St. Augustin, *the one only good, in whom are all other goods.* Behold a St. Francis, who when stript of all worldly goods, being still united to God, found in this a heaven even here upon earth, and could not often enough exclaim: *My God, my God and my all!* Happy the soul that leaves all for God; for in him she finds her all. O Jesus, instead of abandoning me, as I have deserved, thou offerest me pardon and callest me to thy love. Behold I return to thee overwhelmed with sorrow for the evil which I have done, and deeply affected at seeing that even still thou lovest me after the many offences I have committed against thee. Thou lovest me, and I also love thee and love thee more than myself. Receive me into thy favour, and do with me what thou pleasest: only do not deprive me of thy love. Mary, mother, have pity on me.

Meditation Thirty-seventh.

On the love of Jesus crucified.

I. WELL might our loving Redeemer declare that he came upon the earth to enkindle divine love, and that he desired nothing else but to see this sacred fire burning in our hearts: *I am come to cast fire upon the earth: and what will I but that it be kindled?* St. Luke, xii. 49. And in fact, how many happy souls have been so inflamed with the thoughts of a crucified God, as to forsake all things else, to give themselves entirely to his holy love! What more could Jesus Christ have done to induce us to love him, than to die in torments upon a cross to prove how much he loved us? With good reason did St. Francis of Paula, when he contemplated

with admiration Jesus crucified, exclaim in an ecstasy of love: *O charity! charity! charity!*

II. But alas, how generally do men live forgetful of so loving a God! If the vilest of men, if a slave had done for me what Jesus Christ has done and suffered for me, how should I be able to live without loving him? O God! who is he that hangs upon the cross? the same who created me and who now dies for me. That cross, those thorns, those nails exclaim, and with a still louder voice those wounds cry out and demand our love.

III. *May I die*, said St. Francis of Assisium, *for the love of thy love, O Jesus, who hast died for the love of my love.* To make an adequate return for the love of God in dying for us, would require another God to die for him. It would be but little, it would be nothing, were each of us to give a thousand lives in return for the love of Jesus Christ. But Jesus is satisfied with our giving him our hearts; nevertheless he is not satisfied unless we give them entirely to him. For this end, says the Apostle, did he die, that he might have the entire dominion of our hearts: *That he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.* Rom. xiv. 9. My beloved Redeemer, how can I ever more forget thee? how can I love any thing else, after having seen thee die in torments on an infamous gibbet to satisfy for my sins? and how can I reflect that my sins have reduced thee to this, and not die with grief at the remembrance of the offences I have committed against thee? Jesus, help me; I desire nothing but thee; help me, and love me. O Mary, my hope, assist me by your prayers.

Meditation Thirty-eighth.

On the will of God to save all.

I. THE Apostle St. Paul teaches us that God willeth the salvation of all: *he will have all men to be saved.* 1 Tim. ii. 14; and St. Peter saith: *the Lord dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance.* 2 St. Pet. iii. 9. For this end the Son of God came down from heaven, and was made man, and spent thirty-three years in labours and sufferings, and finally shed his blood and laid down his life for our salvation; and shall we forfeit our salvation? Thou, my Saviour, didst spend thy whole life in securing my salvation, and in what have I spent so many years of my life? What fruit hast thou hitherto reaped from me? I have deserved to be cut off and cast into hell. But thou *desirest not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live.* Ez. xxxiii. 11. Yes, O God, I leave all and turn myself to thee. I love thee, and because I love thee, I am sorry for having offended thee. Accept of me, and suffer me not to forsake thee any more.

II. How much did the saints do to secure their eternal salvation! How many nobles and kings have forsaken their kingdoms and estates, and shut themselves up in cloisters! How many young persons have forsaken their country and friends and have dwelt in caves and deserts! And how many martyrs have laid down their lives under the most cruel tortures! and why? to save their souls. And what have we done? Woe to me, who although I know that death is near at hand, yet think not of it! No, my God, I will no longer live at a distance from thee. Why do I delay? Is it that death

may overtake me in the miserable state in which I now am? No, my God, do thou assist me to prepare for death.

III. O God, how many graces has my Saviour bestowed on me to enable me to save my soul! He has caused me to be born in the bosom of the true church; he has many times pardoned me my transgressions; he has favoured me with many lights in sermons, in prayers, in meditations, in communions and spiritual exercises; and often has he called me to his love. In a word, how many means of salvation has he granted me which he has not granted others! And yet, O God, when shall I detach myself from the world and give myself entirely to thee? Behold me, O Jesus, I will no longer resist. Thou hast obliged me to love thee. I desire to be wholly thine, do thou accept of me, and disdain not the love of a sinner who has hitherto so much despised thee. I love thee, my God, my love, and my all; have pity on me. O Mary, you are my hope.

Meditation Thirty-ninth.

On the near approach of death.

I. EVERY one knows that he must certainly die, yet many delude themselves by imagining that death is at such an immense distance from them that it will scarcely ever reach them. No, our life is indeed short, and death is very near us. The days of our sojourning here are few, and perhaps much fewer than we imagine. What else is our life but a light vapour which is driven away and disappears with the wind? a blade of grass which is dried up in the heat of the sun? O God, thou

wouldst not suffer death to overtake me when I was under thy displeasure, because thou didst love me and didst desire my salvation ; wherefore I will also love thee.

II. *My days, said holy Job, have been swifter than a post.* ix. 25. Death is hastening towards us more rapidly than a post, and we at every step, and every breath and moment are drawing nearer and nearer to death. At the time of our death, how shall we wish for one day or one hour of the many we now squander away to no purpose ! Ah, Lord, if death were now announced to me, what should I find that I have done for thee ? Alas ! come to my assistance ; let me not die ungrateful to thee as I hitherto have been. Grant me true sorrow for my sins, the gift of thy love, and holy perseverance.

III. Death hastens towards us ; wherefore we must also hasten to do that which is good, and to put our accounts in order against the day of its arrival. When death comes, it precludes all remedies for what has been done amiss. How many are now in hell who thought of amending their lives at some future period, but were prevented by death and consigned to eternal torments ! My dear Redeemer, I will no longer resist thy calls. Thou offerest me pardon and I am desirous of obtaining it, I pray for it, and hope for it, through that death which thou, my Jesus, hast suffered that thou mayest be able to impart it to me. I am sorry, O infinite goodness, for having offended thee. Thou, my Jesus, hast died for me, and I have postponed thy friendship to my own wretched inclinations. For the future, I hope with thy assistance always to love thee. I love thee, O God, I love thee. Thou art now and shalt be for ever my only good, my only love. Mary, mother of God, watch over me and take pity on me.

Meditation Fortieth.

On God's abandoning the sinner in his sins.

I. IT is a grievous chastisement of God, when he cuts the sinner off in his sins; but still worse is that whereby he abandons him and suffers him to add sin upon sin. "No punishment, is so great," says Bellarmin, "as when sin is made the punishment of sin." I give thee thanks, therefore, O Jesus, for not having suffered me to die in my sins; and I give thee still greater thanks, for not having abandoned me in my sins. And oh! into how much deeper an abyss of sin should I have fallen, if thou hadst not supported me. Continue, O Lord, to keep me from sin and do not forsake me.

II. *I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted. Is. v. 5.* When the master cuts down the fence of his vineyard, and leaves it open for any one to enter therein, it is a sign that he considers it not worth cultivating, and abandons it. In like manner does God proceed when he forsakes a sinful soul: he takes away from her the hedge of his holy fear, of his light, and of his voice; and hence the soul being blinded and enslaved by her vices, which overpower her, despises every thing, the grace of God, heaven, admonitions and censures; she thinks lightly even of her own damnation, and thus enveloped in darkness is certain to be lost for ever. *The wicked man when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth. Prov. xviii. 3.* This have I deserved, O God, for having so often despised thy light and thy calls. But I see that thou hast not yet abandoned me. I love thee, O my God, and in thee do I place all my hopes.

III. *We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed; let us forsake her. Jer. li. 9.* The physi-

cian visits the sick man, prescribes remedies for him, and makes him sensible of his maladies; but when he sees that his patient does not obey him and on this account grows worse and worse, he takes leave of him and forsakes him. It is thus that God deals with obstinate sinners; after a certain time he speaks but little to them, and only assists them with grace just sufficient to enable them to save their souls, but they will not save them. The darkness of their minds, the hardness of their hearts, and the inveteracy of their wicked habits render it morally impossible for them to gain salvation. But, O God, since thou still callest me to repentance, thou hast not yet abandoned me; I desire never more to forsake thee. I love thee, O infinite goodness; and because I love thee I am exceedingly sorry for having offended thee. I love thee, and I hope through thy blood to love thee for ever. Suffer me not to be any more separated from thee. Holy Mary, virgin of virgins, become my advocate.

Meditation Forty-first.

On the examination at the particular judgment.

I. IN the same moment and in the same place in which the soul departs from the body, the divine tribunal is erected, the indictment read and the sentence pronounced by the sovereign Judge. *Whom he foreknew, says St. Paul, he also predestinated to be made conformable to his Son.....them he also justified. Rom. viii. 29.* In order therefore to be made worthy of glory, our lives must be made conformable to the life of Jesus Christ. Hence it is that St. Peter says that, in the day of judgment,

the just man shall scarcely be saved. 1 St. Peter iv. 18. O Jesus, my Saviour and my Judge, what will become of me, since my whole life has hitherto been the reverse of thine? But thy passion is my hope. I am a sinner, but thou canst make me a saint, and this I hope for from thy bounty.

II. The Venerable Father Louis da Ponte, reflecting on the account which he should have to give of his whole life at the time of his death, trembled to such a degree as to make the whole room shake. And how ought we to tremble at the thought of this account, and how diligent ought we to be in seeking the Lord whilst we may find him. At the time of death it will be difficult to find him, if we are overtaken in our sins; but now we may easily find him by repentance and love. Yes, my God, I am sorry above every evil for having despised thee; and I now esteem and love thee above every good.

III. *What shall I do, said holy Job, when God shall rise to judge? and when he shall examine, what shall I answer him?* xxxi. 14. And what shall I answer him, if after so many mercies, so many calls, still I resist him? No, Lord, I will no longer resist thee, I will no longer be ungrateful to thee. I have committed many offences and disloyalties against thee, but thou hast shed thy blood to save me from my sins. *Help thy servants whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.* I am sorry, my sovereign good, for having offended thee, and I love thee with my whole heart; have pity on me. And O Mary, my mother, do not abandon me.

Meditation Forty-second.

On our journey to eternity.

I. *MAN shall go into the house of his eternity.* *Eccles.* xii. 5. This earth is not our true country; we are only passing through it on our way to eternity. The land in which I dwell, the house which I inhabit are not mine: in a short time, and when I least expect it, I must leave them. The house which will contain my body, until the day of general judgment, will be the grave, and the house of my soul will be eternity, in heaven if I be saved, in hell if I be lost. Foolish indeed then should I be were I to place my affections on things which I must soon leave. I will endeavour to procure for myself a happy mansion in which I may dwell for ever.

II. *Man shall go into the house of his eternity.* It is said *he shall go*, to give us to understand that each one shall go, in another life, into that house which he himself has chosen: *he shall go*, he shall not be conducted, but shall go thither of his own free will. Faith teaches us that, in the next life, there are two habitations: one is a palace of delights, where all are happy for ever, and this is paradise: the other is a prison of excruciating torments, where all are for ever miserable, and this is hell. Choose, my soul, to which of the two thou wilt go. If thou desire heaven, thou must walk in the way which leads to heaven; if thou shouldst walk in the way which leads to hell, thou wilt one day unhappily find thyself there. Jesus, enlighten me, Jesus strengthen me. Suffer me not to be separated from thee.

III. *Man shall go into the house of his eternity.* If then I be saved and enter into the house of bliss,

I shall there be happy for ever; but if I be lost and enter inter into the house of woe, I shall be miserable for ever. If therefore I would be saved, I must keep eternity always before my eyes. He who frequently meditates upon eternity does not become attached to the goods of this world, and thus secures his salvation. I will endeavour, therefore, so to regulate all my actions that they may be so many steps towards a happy eternity. O God, I believe in life eternal. Henceforth I will live only for thee; hitherto I have lived for myself and have lost thee, my sovereign good. I will never more lose thee; but will for ever serve and love thee. Assist me, O Jesus, and do not abandon me. Mary, my mother, protect me.

Meditation Forty-third.

On Jesus, as the Man of Sorrows.

I. THE prophet Isaias calls our Blessed Redeemer *a man of sorrows*; and such he was, for his whole life was a life of sorrows. He took upon his own shoulders all our debts. It is true that as he was man and God, a single prayer from him would have been sufficient to make satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; but our Saviour would rigorously satisfy divine justice, and hence he chose for himself a life of contempt and suffering, being content for the love of man to be treated as the last and the vilest of men, as the prophet Isaias had foreseen him: *We have seen him despised and the most abject of men.* O my despised Jesus, by the contempt which thou didst endure thou hast made satisfaction for the contempt with which I have treated thee. Oh! that I had died and had never offended thee.

II. Who, my God, amongst the sons of men, was ever so afflicted and oppressed as our most loving Redeemer? Man, however much he may be afflicted in this world, enjoys from time to time relief and consolation. Thus does our compassionate God treat his ungrateful and rebellious creatures. But he would not thus treat his beloved Son; for the life of Jesus Christ in this world was not only a life of afflictions, but of continual afflictions from its commencement until death. Our Blessed Saviour was deprived of all consolation and of every kind of relief. In a word, he was born but to suffer and to be *the man of sorrows*. O Jesus, how unhappy is he who does not love thee, or who loves thee but little, after thou hast so loved us miserable worms who have offended thee. Enable me from this day forward to love no other but thee, who alone art worthy of being loved.

II. Again, men suffer afflictions, but it is only during the time that they suffer them, because they do not know those which are yet to come. But Jesus Christ, having, as God, a knowledge of all future things, suffered in every moment of his life not only the pains which actually afflicted him, but all those also which were to come upon him, and especially the outrages of his most sorrowful passion, having always before his eyes his scourging at the pillar, his crowning with thorns, his crucifixion and bitter death, with all the sorrows and desolation which accompanied it. And why, O Jesus, didst thou suffer so much for me who have so grievously offended thee? Accept of me now that I may love thee, and that henceforward I may love no other but thee. My love and my only good, accept of me and strengthen me. I am resolved to become holy, that I may please thee alone. Thou desirest me to be all thine, and such do I desire to be. Holy Mary, you are my hope.

Meditation Forty-fourth.

On the folly of neglecting salvation.

I. *WHAT doth it profit a man*, saith our Lord, *if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?* St. Matt. xvi. 26. How many rich men, how many nobles, how many monarchs are now in hell! What now remains to them of their riches and honours, but remorse and rage which prey upon their souls, and will continue to prey upon them for all eternity? O my God, enlighten me and assist me. I hope never more to be deprived of thy grace. Have pity on a sinner who desires to love thee.

II. How comes it, writes Salvian, that men believe in death, judgment, hell and eternity, and yet live without fearing them? Hell is believed, and yet how many go down thither! But, O God, while these truths are believed, they are not dwelt upon, and hence are so many souls lost. Alas, I also have been of the number of those who have been guilty of such folly. Although I knew that by offending thee I was forfeiting thy friendship, and writing my own condemnation; yet I was not restrained from committing sin! “*Cast me not away from thy face.*” I am sensible of the evil I have done in despising thee, my God, and am grieved for it with my whole soul: Oh *cast me not away from thy face.*

III. And then? And then? Oh what force had these two words with F. P. Francis Zazzera when repeated to him by St. Philip Neri, in order to induce him to renounce the world and give himself wholly to God!* *O that they would be wise, and*

* The circumstance, to which Blessed Liguori here alludes, is thus related by him in his “*Sermoni: vol. 1. p. 217. Dom. Settim.*

St. Philip Neri speaking, one day, to a young man named Francis Zaz-

would understand, and would provide for their latter end. Deut. xxxii. 29. O ! if all persons would but think of death, in which every thing must be relinquished ; of judgment, in which an account must be given of our whole lives ; of a happy or miserable eternity, which must be the lot of each one : if all did but provide for these last things of their lives, no one would be lost. The present only is thought of, and hence is eternal salvation lost. I give thee thanks, O God, for the patience with which thou hast hitherto borne with me, and for the light which thou now bestowest upon me. I see, that although I forgot thee, thou didst not forget me. I am sorry, my sovereign good, for having turned my back upon thee, and I am now resolved to give myself entirely to thee. And why should I delay ? that thou mayest abandon me, and that death may find me as miserable and ungrateful as I have been even until now ? No, my God, I will no more offend thee, but will love thee. I love thee, O infinite goodness, give me perseverance and thy holy love, I ask for nothing more. Mary, refuge of sinners, intercede for me.

Meditation Forty-fifth.

On the moment of death.

I. " O MOMENT, on which depends eternity !" Oh ! how much depends on the last moment of our

zera, who expected to make his fortune in the world by his talents, said : Be of good heart, my son, you may make a great fortune, you may become an eminent lawyer, you may then be made a prelate, then perhaps a cardinal, and then, who knows, perhaps even pope. And then ? and then ? Go, continued the Saint, and reflect upon these two words. The young man went his way, and after having meditated on the two words, *and then ? and then ?* abandoned all his worldly prospects, and gave himself entirely to God. Leaving the world, he entered into the same congregation which St. Philip had founded, and *then* he died in the odour of sanctity."

lives, on our last breath ! either an eternity of delights, or an eternity of torments ; a life of happiness or a life of misery. What folly therefore must it be for the sake of a wretched momentary pleasure in this life to run the risk of making an evil end, and commencing a life of misery, which will never terminate ! O God ! what will become of me in the last moment of my life ? O Jesus, who didst die for my salvation, suffer me not to be lost for ever, suffer me not to lose thee, my only good.

II. Oh God ! how do those miserable criminals who are condemned to cast lots for their lives tremble when they throw the dice, upon the cast of which depends their life or death. Tell me Christian, if thou wert in such a situation, how much thou wouldest give to be liberated from it ? But faith teaches thee that thou wilt one day arrive at that last moment, on which will depend thy eternal life or death. Thou wilt then say : " Alas I must now be either happy for ever with God, or in despair for ever without him." No, my God, I will not lose thee ; if I have hitherto forfeited thy friendship, I am sorry for it and sincerely repent of it ; I will never lose thee more.

III. Either we believe, or we do not believe. And if we believe that there is an eternity, that we can die only once, and that if we die ill, the consequences will be eternal, without the least hope of remedy ; why do we not resolve to separate ourselves from all danger of being lost, and to use all the means in our power to secure for ourselves a happy death ? No security can be too great when eternity is at stake. The days of our lives are so many favours from God, by which he allows us time to prepare our accounts against the arrival of death. Delay not, for thou hast no time to lose. Behold me, O God, tell me what I must do to be saved, for I will do all that thou requirest of me.

I have turned my back upon thee ; and for this I am exceedingly sorry, and for having done so would willingly die of grief. Pardon me, O Lord, and suffer me not to forsake thee any more. I love thee above all things, and will never more cease to love thee. Holy Mary, Virgin of virgins, obtain for me the grace of perseverance in virtue.

Meditation Forty-sixth.

On the desire of God to save sinners.

I. IT is indeed very surprising that man, a worm of the earth, should dare to offend his Creator and turn his back upon him, by despising his graces, after God has so favoured and loved him as to lay down his life to save him. But it is still more surprising that God, after having been thus despised by man, should seek after him, invite him to repentance and offer him his pardon, as though God stood in need of us and not we of him. O Jesus, thou seekest me, and I seek after thee. Thou desirest me, and I desire only thee.

II. *For Christ, saith the Apostle, we beseech you, be reconciled to God. 2 Cor v. 20.* "And does God," exclaims St. Chrysostom, "call thus upon sinners ! and what does he ask of them ? to be reconciled, and to be in peace with him." My Redeemer, Jesus Christ, how couldst thou have had so much love for me who have so often offended thee ? I detest all my offences against thee ; give me still greater grief, still greater love, that I may deplore my sins, not so much on account of the punishments I have deserved by them, as for the injury I have offered to thee, my God, who art infinitely good and amiable.

III. *What is man, exclaims holy Job, that thou shouldst magnify him? or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?* vii. 17. What good, O Lord, hast thou ever derived from me? and what canst thou expect from me, that thou lovest me so much, and comest so near to me? Hast thou then forgotten all the injuries and treasons which I have committed against thee? But since thou hast so much loved me, I, a miserable worm, must also love thee, my Creator and my Redeemer. Yes, I do love thee, my God, I love thee with my whole heart, I love thee more than myself; and because I love thee, I will do every thing to please thee. Thou knowest that nothing is so grievous to me as the remembrance of my having so often despised thy love. I hope for the future to be able to compensate by my love for the frequent displeasure which I have given thee. Help me for the sake of that precious blood which thou hast shed for me. Help me also, O holy Mary, for the love of your Son who died for me.

Meditation Forty-seventh.

On the sentence at the particular judgment.

I. OH! what joy will he experience who, departing out of this life in the grace of God, shall, on being presented before Jesus Christ, behold him with a benignant countenance, be lovingly received by him, and hear from him those delightful words: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant: because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* St. Matt. xxv. 23. But, O Jesus, if I were now to be summoned to judgment before thee, how

could I hope that thou wouldest call me a good and faithful servant, when I have hitherto been so bad and faithless towards thee, changing my promises of fidelity into treasons? But I will be faithful to thee for the future, and will sooner lose my life a thousand times than forfeit thy grace. Do thou give me strength to fulfil this my resolution.

II. On the other hand, what anguish, O Jesus, will that sinner experience, who, dying in sin, and being presented before thee, shall behold thy wrathful countenance! The soul that departs this life in God's displeasure, will first condemn herself, and will then hear from Jesus Christ that terrible sentence: "*Depart from me, thou accursed, into ever-lasting fire.*" How often, O Jesus, have I deserved to hear from thee the same sentence, when I have committed mortal sin! When death shall have overtaken me, thou wilt then be my judge; but now thou art my Father and Redeemer, ready to pardon me, if I am sorry for having offended thee. I am therefore sorry, from the bottom of my heart, for all my offences against thee; and I am sorry, not so much on account of hell which I have deserved by them, as because by them I have grievously offended thee, who hast loved me with an infinite love.

III. The soul goes forth and leaves the body, but it is for some time doubtful whether the person be alive or dead. While the bystanders are doubting, the soul has already entered eternity. The priest, satisfied at length that the man is dead, recites the prayer of the church: "Come to his assistance, all ye saints of God: meet him all ye angels of God: receive his soul and present it now before its Lord." But of what avail will it be to the soul that has departed an enemy of God, and upon whom sentence has already been passed, to call the saints and angels to her assistance? O, my good angel,

ye saints my holy advocates, St. Michael, St. Joseph, and you my holy protectress Mary, help me now whilst you have it in your power. And thou, my Redeemer, pardon me now whilst thou dost exercise mercy. I am sorry for having offended thee, and I love thee with my whole heart. Assist me, O Lord, and support me, that I may never offend thee more. O Mary, take me for ever to your care.

Meditation Forty-eighth.

On an unprovided death.

I. NOTHING is more certain than death, but nothing more uncertain than the hour of death. It is certain that the year and the day of each one's death is already determined by our Lord, though we know them not; and wisely does God conceal them from us, in order that we may be always prepared for our departure. I give thee thanks, O Jesus, for having waited for me, and for not having called me out of life in the state of mortal sin. During the remainder of my life I will bewail my iniquities and love thee with all my strength. I know that I must die, and by thy grace I will prepare myself for a good death.

II. Jesus Christ admonishes us of the hour of our death, and when shall it be? when we least expect it. *At what hour you think not, the Son of man will come.* St. Luke xii. 40. If then, says St. Bernard, death may at any time take us out of life, we should at all times be prepared for it and keep our accounts in order. O Jesus, I will not wait until the moment of my death to give myself to thee. Thou hast said that those who seek thee shall

find thee: “*Seek and ye shall find:*” I seek thee, I desire thee; grant that I may find thee. I am sorry for my sins and will never more offend thee.

III. When then, dear Christian, thou art tempted to commit sin with the hope of confessing it on the morrow, say to thyself: but who knows but that this moment may be my last? And if in this moment I should be guilty of sin, and death should overtake me, whither should I go? O God, how many miserable sinners have been struck by death in the act of feasting themselves on some poisonous gratification! The devil will say to thee: this misfortune will not befall thee. But do thou answer him: if it should befall me, what will become of me for eternity? O God, may not that happen to me which has happened to so many other unhappy sinners? How many are now in hell for lesser sins than I have committed! I give thee thanks, O Jesus, for having waited for me with so much patience, and for having now enlightened me. I have erred in forsaking thee; and death might have been my punishment; but since thou givest me time, henceforward I will think of nothing but of loving thee. Assist me with thy grace. And do you, Mary, assist me by your holy intercession.

Meditation Forty-ninth.

On the eternity of hell.

I. IF hell were not eternal, it would not be hell. Punishment which does not continue for a long time is not grievous punishment. On the other hand, punishment, however light it may be, when it continues for a long time, becomes intolerable.

Were a person obliged during the whole of his life to see the same entertainments, or to hear the same music, how could he endure it? What then must it be to remain in hell and to suffer all its torments! and for how long a time? For all eternity. It would be folly, for the sake of a day's pleasure, to condemn one's self to be burnt alive. And is it not folly, for the sake of a sensual gratification, which can last but for one moment, to condemn one's self to the fire of hell, whose victims, though dying every moment, yet never never die? O God, preserve me by thy grace. Woe to me if I should turn my back upon thee after the great mercy with which thou hast dealt with me! Keep me, O God, and preserve me from so great a misfortune.

II. Let us awaken our slumbering faith. It is certain that he who is lost is lost for ever, without the least hope of being redeemed from eternal ruin. *They shall go into eternal punishment. St. Matt. xxv. 46.* He who once enters the prison of hell can come out no more. Otherwise the condemned wretches would flatter themselves with hopes, and would say: who knows, perhaps God may some day have pity on us and deliver us? But no, they well know that hell will never have an end, and that they must continue to suffer the same torments which they at present endure, so long as God shall be God. My dear Redeemer, I know too well that by the past I have forfeited thy grace, and condemned myself to hell; but I do not know whether thou hast pardoned me. Hasten to forgive me, O Jesus, while I bitterly lament my offences against thee, and never suffer me to offend thee any more.

III. In this life death is of all things the most dreaded, but in hell it is of all things the most desired. There they desire and long for death, but cannot die. *They shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them. Apoc. ix. 6.* Are there not at least,

in that place of torments, some to compassionate them? No, all hate them, and rejoice in their sufferings, which will last for ever, without end or mitigation. The trumpet of divine justice continually sounds and thunders forth in their ears those terrible words: *ever, ever; never, never.* Amongst these miserable beings, O Jesus, I have deserved to be numbered; but do thou, who hast hitherto preserved me from falling into hell, preserve me for the future from falling into sin, which alone can condemn me to that place of woe. Ah! never suffer me again to become thy enemy. I love thee, O infinite goodness, and I am sorry for having offended thee. Pardon me, and as I have deserved to burn for ever in the fire of hell, grant me to burn for ever with the fire of thy holy love. O Mary, in your powerful intercession do I confide.

Meditation Fiftieth.

On the uncertainty of grace.

I. *DELAY not to be converted to the Lord, and put it not off from day to day: for his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee.* Eccl. v. 9. The Lord admonishes us to be speedily converted, if we would be saved; because if we go on putting off our conversion from day to day, the time of vengeance will come, when God will neither call nor wait for us any longer; death will overtake us in sin, and there will be no means of escaping eternal damnation. God admonishes us in this manner, because he loves us and wills not to see us perish. I am convinced, O God, that thou desirest my salvation; I know that thou desirest to deal with me in thy

mercy; and it is my desire never more to despise thee.

II. Alas! to how many are the admonitions given by God during life, become now in hell the most cruel swords that pierce their souls! In proportion as the mercies which God showed them were greater, so were their crimes more enormous. If, O Jesus, thou hadst condemned me to hell, as I have deserved, how great would have been my punishment, since thy graces and favours have been so abundant towards me! No, I will no longer be ungrateful to thee. Say to me what thou pleasest, and I will obey thee in all things. I am sorry for having so often offended thee; from henceforward I will not seek to please myself, but to please only thee, my God, and only good.

III. How cautious are men in their temporal affairs, and yet how negligent in the affairs of eternity! If a man have to receive a sum of money from another, he uses every expedient to obtain it as quickly as possible, saying: "Who knows what "may happen?" And yet, why do so many live months and years in sin? Because they do not say, when the soul is at stake: "Who knows what "may happen?" If money be lost, however valuable it may be, all is not lost; but if the soul be lost all is lost, and must be lost for ever, without hope of recovery. My beloved Redeemer, thou hast given me life that I may become worthy of thy grace; and yet I have often renounced thy grace for something worse than nothing. Pardon me, O infinite goodness, for I am sorry, from the bottom of my heart, for having done so. O Jesus, thou hast done too much to oblige me to love thee, and I desire to love thee to the utmost of my power. I love thee, my sovereign good, I love thee more than myself. Permit me not, O God, to cease to love thee any more. O Mary, holy queen, protect me.

Meditation Fifty-first.

On the death of Jesus for the love of men.

I. WAS it ever possible that God the Creator of all things should have been pleased to die for the love of his creatures? It is of faith that he has done so. *He hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us. Eph. v. 2.* The earth, the heavens and all nature, with astonishment beheld Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, the Lord of the universe, die of intense pain and anguish, on a disgraceful cross, and why? for the love of men. And do men believe this and not love God? I have believed it, O Jesus, and yet not only have I not loved thee, but I have frequently offended thee. Pardon me, I beseech thee, and remind me continually of the death which thou hast suffered for me, that I may never more offend thee, but may always love thee.

II. It was not necessary for man's salvation that God should die; one drop of his blood, a single tear, or a prayer would have been sufficient, because being of infinite value, it would have redeemed this, or a thousand other worlds. But, O Jesus, thou wouldst suffer so much, to teach us thy great love for us. Hence St. Bonaventure exclaims, but with much greater reason may I exclaim, who have so often offended my Redeemer: "Alas! my "God, why hast thou so much loved me? why, O "Lord, why? who am I?" O divine Pastor of my soul, behold I am the lost sheep, in quest of which thou didst come upon the earth. I have ungratefully fled away from thee: but since, unmindful of the sufferings which I have occasioned thee, thou callest me to thy love, behold me, miserable as I am, but overcome with thy great goodness, embracing thy sacred feet, nailed to the cross. Jesus,

my love, my treasure, I love thee, and because I love thee, I am sorry for having offended thee.

III. St. Bernard imagining himself present when Pilate passed sentence of death on our Blessed Saviour, thus addresses him: "What hast thou done "my most innocent Saviour, that thou shouldst be "thus condemned? Thou art innocence itself; "and how do I now behold thee condemned to "death, even to the death of the cross? What "crime hast thou committed?" And he proceeds to answer: "Thy crime is love." As if he had said: ah! it is thy too great love for us and not Pilate, that condemns thee to death. When, my dear Redeemer, I remember the offences I have committed against thee, it is not hell, which I have deserved for them, that makes me grieve, but the love which thou hast shown me. Ah! my crucified God, I desire to be from henceforth and for ever thine, and I will love no other but thee. Strengthen my weakness, and make me faithful to thee. Holy Mary, mother of God, enable me to love Jesus: this is the only favour I ask.

Meditation Fifty-second.

On the certainty of being either saved or lost.

I. *WITH fear and trembling*, saith the Apostle, *work out your salvation.* Phil. ii. 12. In order to be saved we should tremble lest we be lost, for there is no medium; we must be either saved or lost for ever. He who trembles not, is in great danger of being lost, because he takes but little care to employ the means of obtaining salvation. God desires that all should be saved, and he gives to all his grace; but he requires that all should co-

operate for this end. All desire to be saved, many because they will not employ the means of salvation, are lost. St. Philip Neri used to say: "Heaven is not made for the slothful." Enlighten me, O Lord, that I may know what I ought to do, and what to avoid, for I desire to do all that thou requirest of me. I am determined, by thy grace, to save my soul.

II. St. Teresa said to her religious: "One soul! "my daughters, one eternity!" She meant, that in this world we ought not to attend to any thing but to the salvation of our souls; because if the soul be lost, all will be lost; and if once lost, will be lost for ever. Benedict the twelfth, being asked by a prince for a favour which he could not grant without committing sin, answered the ambassador: "Tell your prince that if I had two souls I would "give him one; but as I have only one, I cannot "consent to lose it for his sake." Thus should we answer the devil or the world when they offer us forbidden fruit. O God, how often have I lost my soul by forfeiting thy grace! But since thou offerest me thy pardon, I detest all the offences I have committed against thee, and love thee above all things.

III. Would that we were fully impressed with the meaning of that great maxim of St. Francis Xavier: "there is but one evil, and one good, in "the world!" The only evil is damnation, the only good, salvation. No; poverty, infirmity, ignominies are not evils; these when embraced with resignation will increase our glory in heaven. On the other hand, health, riches and honours are not goods for too many Christians, because they become to them greater occasions of losing their souls. Save me then, O God, and do with me what thou pleasest. Thou knowest and willest what is best for me. I abandon myself to thy

mercy: *Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.* I am so sorry for having been hitherto opposed to thy will, as to be ready to die to expiate my offences; but now I love thee, and will nothing but what thou willest. Grant me thy love, that I may be faithful to thee. And, Mary, give me your powerful assistance.

Meditation Fifty-third.

On the certainty of death.

I. HOW is it possible, O God, that there should be any Christians, who believe that they must one day die, and that after death an eternity of happiness or misery awaits them; who know that on the moment of death will depend their being happy or miserable for ever; and yet adopt not all the means of securing for themselves the blessing of a good death? Give, O Lord, tears to my eyes that I may bewail my offences against thee. I knew that by offending thee I should forfeit thy grace and condemn myself to eternal torments; I knew this, and yet I was not restrained from committing sin. I am sorry, O God, for having dis- honoured thee, by renouncing thee for the sake of my own wretched inclinations; have pity on me.

II. If we hear of one dying suddenly who did not live prepared for death, we compassionate him, and say: "Alas! what has become of his poor "soul?" And yet why are we not ourselves prepared at all times to die? It may be that the mis- fortune of a sudden death may not happen to us; but whether sooner or later, whether prepared or unprepared, whether we think of it or not, we must one day surrender our souls into the hands of God.

The place of execution is already prepared for us, and the malady which is to be our executioner and take us out of the world is stealing upon us; why then do we not endeavour to become daily more and more united to Jesus Christ, who will soon become our Judge? My dear Redeemer, I hope through the merits of thy death to live and die in thy grace and favour. I love thee, O infinite goodness, and I hope to love thee always in this life and for all eternity in the next.

III. In every succeeding age, cities and kingdoms are peopled with new beings, and their predecessors buried in their graves. Those who lived here a century ago, where are they now? gone into eternity! And thus, dear reader, in a hundred years hence, even in a much shorter time, neither you nor I shall be alive in this world, but we shall be either happy or miserable for ever in the next; either saved or lost for all eternity, one or other will most certainly be our lot. I may then, O God, either be saved, as I hope I shall be, or I may be lost on account of my sins. And is it possible that I may be lost, and yet not think of adopting every means of securing my salvation? Enlighten me, O Lord, and make known to me what I must do to be saved, for with thy help I will do all that thou requirest of me. I have many times lost my respect for thee, my Father, but thou hast not ceased to love me. I detest all my offences against thee, and I love thee, O God, with my whole soul. Give me thy blessing, Father, and never suffer me to be again separated from thee. Mary, my mother, have pity on me.

Meditation Fifty-fourth.

On the vanity of the world.

I. *ONLY the grave, saith holy Job, remaineth for me.* xvii. 1. Days and years pass away, pleasures, honours and riches pass away, and what will be the end? Death will come and strip us of all, and we shall be buried in the grave to corrupt and moulder into dust, deserted and forgotten by all. Alas! how, in the end of our lives, will the remembrance of all we have acquired in this world serve for nothing but to increase our anguish, and our uncertainty of salvation! O death, O death, never depart from before my eyes. O God, do thou enlighten me.

II. *My life is cut off as by a weaver.* Isa. xxxviii. 12. How many in the midst of executing their long-contemplated designs, are overtaken by death and deprived of all things! Ah, with what pain and remorse will the goods of this world be regarded, on the bed of death, by those who have been unduly attached to them! To worldlings who are spiritually blind, the goods of this present life appear great; but death will discover what they really are, dust, smoke and vanity. Before the light of this last lamp all the dazzling grandeur of this world will vanish and disappear. The greatest fortunes, the highest honours, when considered on the bed of death, will lose all their value and splendour. The shade of death will obscure even crowns and sceptres. Grant me, O God, thy holy grace, for this alone is all I desire. I am grieved for ever having despised such a treasure. Jesus, have pity on me.

III. Of what avail then will riches be at the hour of death, when nothing will remain for us but

a wooden coffin and a winding sheet ? Of what avail will be the honours which we have acquired, when no others will remain for us but a funeral procession and a tomb, which will not be able to afford us the least satisfaction, if our souls should be lost ? And of what avail will the beauty of the body be, when the body itself will become a mass of worms, infect the air with its stench, and excite horror in all who behold it ? My dear Redeemer, although I knew that by sinning I should forfeit thy friendship, yet did I sin ; but I hope for pardon from thee who hast died to purchase pardon for me. O that I had never offended thee, my good God ! I behold the love which thou hast shown me ; and this increases my grief for having displeased thee who art so good a Father. I love thee, O Lord, and will never live without loving thee ; give me perseverance. Mary, my mother, pray to Jesus for me.

Meditation Fifty-fifth.

On provoking God by sin.

I. THUS does the Royal Prophet speak of sinners : *They tempted and provoked the most high God.* Ps. lxxvii. 65. God is incapable of grief ; but, were it possible for him to grieve, every sin which men commit would deeply afflict him and deprive him of happiness. Sin, O God, is the return I have made thee for thy love ! How often have I renounced thy friendship for the sake of some wretched self-gratification ! O. infinite goodness, because thou art such, pardon me my offences.

II. St. Bernard moreover adds, that the malice of sin is so great, that it would annihilate God,

were this possible. If God could die, mortal sin would deprive him of life. And how? Father Medina answers: "because it would give him infinite sorrow." How afflicting is it to be injured by those whom we have especially befriended and loved! What then must it be for God to behold man, whom he has favoured with so many and such great benefits and loved with such exceeding great love, even to shedding his blood and laying down his life; what must it be to behold man turn his back upon him and despise his grace for a mere nothing, for a fit of passion, or a momentary pleasure! Were he capable of grief and sadness, he would die of the bitterness which such conduct would occasion him. Dearest Jesus, I am the lost sheep, thou art the good shepherd who hast laid down thy life for thy sheep; have pity on me, pardon me for all the displeasure which my sins have occasioned thee. I am grieved, O Jesus, for having offended thee, and love thee with my whole soul.

III. It was because our loving Redeemer had our sins constantly before his eyes that his life was so painful and full of bitterness. This was the cause of his sweating blood and suffering the agonies of death in the garden of Gethsemane, where he declared that *his soul was sorrowful even unto death*. What made him sweat blood and cast him into such a dreadful agony, but the sight of the sins of men? Give me then, O Jesus, a share of the sorrow which then oppressed thee for my sins; grant that it may afflict me during my whole life, and, if thou pleaseest, even unto death. O Jesus, I desire never more to displease thee, I will never more afflict thee, but will love thee with all my strength, who art my love, my life, and my only good. Suffer me not to offend thee any more. Mary, my hope, have compassion on me.

Meditation Fifty-sixth.

On the last judgment.

I. THE last day is called in Scripture a day of wrath and misery ; and such it will be for all those unhappy beings who shall have died in mortal sin ; for on that day their most secret crimes will be made manifest to the whole world, and themselves separated from the company of the saints, and condemned to the eternal prison of hell, where they will suffer all the agonies of ever dying yet always remaining alive. St Jerome, in the cave of Bethlehem, devoted to continual prayer and penance, trembled at the bare thought of the General judgment. The Ven. F. Juvenal Ancina hearing that sequence for the dead sung : "Dies viæ, dies illa," was so struck with the anticipation of judgment that he left the world and embraced a religious life. O Jesus, what will become of me, in that day ? Shall I be placed on thy right with the elect, or on thy left with the reprobate ? I know that I have deserved to be placed on thy left, but I know also that thou wilt still pardon me, if I repent of my sins : wherefore I do repent of them with my whole heart, and am resolved rather to die than offend thee any more.

II. As this will be a day of calamity and terror for the reprobate, so will it be a day of joy and triumph for the elect ; for then, in the sight of all mankind, will the blessed souls of the elect be proclaimed queens of paradise, and spouses of the immaculate Lamb. O Jesus, thy precious blood is my hope. Remember not the offences which I have committed against thee, and enflame my whole soul with thy love. I love thee, my sovereign good, and I trust that in that day I shall be asso-

ciated with those loving souls who will praise and love thee for all eternity.

III. Choose, my soul; choose now either an eternal crown in that blessed kingdom, where God will be seen and loved face to face in the company of the saints, of the angels, and of Mary the mother of Jesus; or the prison of hell, where thou must weep and lament for ever, abandoned by God and by all. "O Lamb of God, that takest away the 'sins of the world, have mercy on us.'" O divine Lamb, who, to deliver us from the pains of hell, was pleased to sacrifice thy divine life, by a bitter death upon the cross, have compassion on us; but more particularly on me who have more than others offended thee. I am sorry above every evil for having dishonoured thee by my sins, but I hope on that day to honour thee before men and angels, by proclaiming thy mercies towards me. O Jesus, help me to love thee; I desire thee alone. O Mary, holy queen, protect me in that day.

Meditation Fifty-seventh.

On the intensity of the pains of hell.

I. IN this life when a person suffers, however great his sufferings may be, he may, at least occasionally, obtain some mitigation or repose. A sick man may suffer all the day long the pains of the most cruel disorders; but, when night comes, he may perhaps sleep a little and be somewhat relieved. Not so with the miserable reprobate. For him there is no relief, no repose. He must weep and lament for ever, he must suffer for ever, and suffer torments the most excruciating, without once having throughout all eternity one moment of ease

or mitigation. Such, O Jesus, would have been my lot, hadst thou called me out of life in my sins. Dearest Redeemer, I refuse not to suffer, but will truly love thee.

II. In this life by constantly suffering pain we become accustomed to it and better able to bear it; time mitigates sufferings which at first were most grievous to us. But will the souls in hell, by eternally suffering the torments which they endure, by the habit of enduring them for so many years, will they ever find their intensity diminished? No, for the torments of hell are of such a nature that, at the end of a hundred or a thousand years, those souls will experience the same degree of pain from them as when they first descended into that bottomless abyss. "In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, "let me never be confounded." I know, O Lord, that I have frequently deserved hell, yet I know likewise that thou dost not desire the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. O my God, I will not continue obstinate, but will repent with my whole soul of all my sins, and will love thee more than myself; do thou restore me to life, to the life of thy holy grace.

III. In this life when a person suffers he has the pity and sympathy of his relatives and friends; and these afford at least some comfort. But how miserable would it be for a man in the most excruciating pains, to be upbraided and reproached by his relatives and friends with the misdeeds for which he was suffering, saying to him without pity: "Rave on in rage and despair; thou hast deserved "all that thou sufferest." The miserable wretches in hell suffer all kinds of torments, suffer them continually without any relief or comfort, and have none to compassionate them. Not even God can compassionate them, for they are his enemies: nor Mary, the mother of mercy: nor the angels, nor

the saints; on the contrary they rejoice in their sufferings. And, at the same time, what is the conduct of the devils towards the reprobate? They trample upon them and reproach them with the crimes which they have committed against God, and for which they are now most justly punished. Holy Mary, mother of God, have pity on me, for you have it now in your power to take pity on me and to recommend me to your divine Son. O Jesus, thou who didst not spare thyself, to have compassion on me, but didst die upon the cross for my sake, save me, and may my salvation be to love thee for ever. I am sorry, O Lord, for having offended thee, and will love thee with my whole heart.

Meditation Fifty-eighth.

On the love of Christ crucified.

I. WHO could have conceived that the Son of God, the Lord of the universe, to show his love for us, would suffer and die upon a cross, if he had not really done so? With reason therefore did Moses and Elias on mount Thabor speak of the death of Jesus Christ as of an excess of love. And what could be a greater excess of love than for the Creator to die for his creatures? To make thee an adequate return for thy love, my dear Redeemer, it would be necessary for another God to die for thee. It would therefore be but little, it would be nothing, were we poor miserable worms of the earth to give our whole lives for thee, who hast given thine for us.

II. What should still more excite us to love him is the ardent desire with which, through the course of his life, he longed for the hour of his death. By

this desire he indeed proved how great his love was for us. *I have a baptism*, said he, *wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.* St. Luke xii. 50. I must be baptized with the baptism of my own blood, to wash away the sins of men, and how am I dying with the desire of my bitter passion and death ! My soul, lift up thine eyes, and behold thy Lord hanging upon a disgraceful cross ; behold the blood which trickles down from his wounds ; behold his mangled body, all inviting thee to love him. Thy Redeemer in his sufferings would have thee love him at least through compassion. O Jesus, thou didst not refuse me thy life and precious blood, and shall I refuse thee any thing that thou requirest of me ? No, thou hast given thyself to me without reserve, I will give myself to thee in like manner.

III. St. Francis of Sales speaking of these words of the Apostle: *The charity of Christ presseth us*, 2 Cor. v. 14. says: "Knowing that Jesus Christ "being true God has loved us even to the laying "down of his life for us, and this upon a cross, do "we not feel our hearts as it were in a press, forc- "bly straitened, and love expressed from them by "a violence which is the more powerful as it is the "more amiable ?" And he adds: "Why there- "fore do we not cast ourselves upon Jesus Christ "crucified, to die on the cross for the love of him "who has willingly died upon the cross for the "love of us ? I will adhere to him, should we say, "and will never abandon him, I will die with him "and be consumed in the fire of his love. My "Jesus has given himself entirely to me, and I "will give myself entirely to him. I will live and "die upon his bosom ; neither life nor death shall "ever separate me from him. O eternal love ! my "soul seeks thee and espouses thee for ever." Ma- ry, mother of God, obtain that I may belong en- tirely to Jesus Christ.

Meditation Fifty-ninth.

On the irretrievable loss of the Soul.

I. THERE is no error so fatal in its consequences as the loss of eternal salvation. Other errors may be repaired: if a person lose a situation, he may perhaps in time regain it, if he lose his goods, he may replace them; but if he lose his soul he has no remedy nor hope of redemption. He can die but once; and if that once his soul be lost, it must be lost for ever, and no power can save it for all eternity. Behold, O God, a wretched sinner prostrate at thy feet, one who for so many years past has deserved to dwell in hell without further hope of salvation, but who now loves thee, and is sorry above every other evil for having offended thee, and hopes for mercy.

II. Does then nothing remain for the many wretched souls in hell but to lament bitterly, and say: *therefore we have erred*, and there is no remedy for our error, nor will there be so long as God shall be God? Ah! my dear Redeemer, were I in hell, I could never more repent, nor love thee. I thank thee for having borne with me with such great patience, even though I have deserved hell; and now that I am still able to repent and to love thee, I do sincerely repent for having offended thy infinite goodness, and love thee above all things, more than I love myself. Never permit me, O Jesus, to cease to love thee.

III. Oh what a torment must it be to the souls in hell to think that they knew their error before they were lost, and that they are lost entirely through their own fault! If a person lose a gold ring through carelessness, or a valuable coin, he has no peace for thinking that he has lost it through his own fault. O God! how great is the internal

torment of the wicked when they exclaim : "I have "lost my soul, I have lost heaven, I have lost my "God ; I have lost my all ; and this, through my "own fault!" O my dear Saviour, I desire never to lose thee : if I have hitherto lost thee, I have done ill ; I am sorry for it with my whole soul, and love thee above all things. O Jesus, thou hast saved me from hell that I may love thee. I will therefore truly love thee. Enable me to compensate by my love for the offences which I have committed against thee. Holy Virgin Mary, you are my hope.

Meditation Sixtieth.

On the Certainty of Death.

I. HOW much is contained in these words : "we must die!" Christian brother, thou must one day certainly die. As thy name was one day entered in the baptismal register, so will it one day be entered in the book of the dead, and this day is already determined by Almighty God. As thou now speakest of the dear memory of thy father, or of thy uncle, or brother, so will posterity speak of thee. As thou now frequently hearest of the deaths of thy friends or acquaintance, so will others hear of thy death, and thou wilt be gone into eternity. O God, what will then become of me ? When my body shall be carried to the church, and mass said over me, where will be my soul ? Enable me, O Lord, to do something for thy service before death overtakes me. How wretched should I be if at this moment it should surprise me !

II. What would you say of a criminal on the way to execution, who was looking about him here

and there, and attending only to the amusements which happened to be going on? would you not esteem him mad, or a man who did not believe his impending fate? Are you not every moment advancing towards death? and what do you think of? You know that you must die, and that you can die only once: You believe that after this life another awaits you which will never end; and that this eternal life will be happy or miserable according as your accounts shall be found at the day of your judgment: and how can you believe these truths and attend to any thing else but making preparation for a good death? Enlighten me, O my God, and let the thoughts of death, and of the eternity in which I must dwell, be ever present to my mind.

III. Look at the skeletons heaped up in cemeteries: they are silently saying to you: "What has "happened to us, will soon overtake you." The same is repeated to you by the portraits of your parents who are dead, by the letters of their handwriting, by the rooms, the beds, the clothes which they once possessed and used, but which they have now quitted and left behind for you. All these things remind you of death which is waiting for you. My crucified Jesus, I will not delay to embrace thee till the moment of my death, when thy crucified image will be presented to me; but I will embrace thee now and press thee to my heart. Hitherto I have frequently expelled thee from my soul, but now I love thee more than myself, and am sorry for having despised thee. For the future I will be always thine, and thou shalt be always mine. This is my hope through thy bitter passion and death. And this also do I hope for through your protection, O ever blessed Mary.

Meditation Sixty-first.

On the love with which God receives the repentant sinner.

I. THE kings of the earth reject from their presence their rebellious subjects, when they come to seek for pardon; but Jesus Christ assures us that he will never reject any rebellious sinner that penitently casts himself at his feet: *him that cometh to me I will not cast out.* *St. John vi. 37.* He despiseth not the heart that is humble and sorry for having offended him: *a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.* *Ps. l.* I do not, O Jesus, deserve thy pardon for the offences which I have committed against thee, but thou knowest that nothing afflicts me so much as the remembrance of my having offended thee.

II. But how can I be afraid that thou, my God, wilt cast me off, when thou invitest me to return to thee, and offerest me thy pardon? *Return to me, and I will receive thee.* *Jer. iii. 11.* How can I doubt, when thou promisest to embrace us, when we are converted to thee? *Turn ye to me, and I will turn to you.* *Zach. i. 3.* Do not then, O Lord, turn thy back upon me, for I will renounce all things, and turn myself to thee, my sovereign good. I have offended thee too long, and will now at least love thee.

III. Our good God moreover adds, that if the sinner repent of the evil which he has done, he is willing to forget all his sins: *If the wicked do penance living he shall live, and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done.* *Ez. xviii. 21, 22.* My dear Redeemer! I will never forget my sins, that I may always bewail the evil which I have done against thee; but I trust and hope that thou, as thou hast promised, wilt

soon forget them, and that my past iniquities will not hinder thee from loving me. Hast thou not said that thou *lovest those who love thee?* *Wis.* viii. Hitherto I have not loved thee, and have deserved thy hatred; but now I will love thee, and hope that thou wilt no longer reject me; and as thou forgettest what is past, forgive me, unite me to thyself, and never suffer me to be again separated from thee. Mary, assist me by your holy intercession.

Meditation Sixty-second.

On temptations to relapse.

I. CHRISTIAN, when the devil again tempts thee to sin, telling thee that "God is merciful," remember that the Lord "sheweth mercy towards them that fear him," and not to them that despise him. "God is merciful," it is true; yet how many does he daily condemn to the torments of hell! "God is merciful," but he is also just. He is merciful to those who repent of their sins, but not to those who abuse his mercy to offend him the more freely. O God, how often have I done this! how often have I offended thee because thou wast good and merciful!

II. The devil will say to thee: "As he has pardoned thee many past sins, so will he pardon thee the sin which thou art now about to commit." No, thou must reply; because he has so often forgiven me, I ought to be the more afraid, that, if I should again offend him, he will no more pardon me, but punish me for all the crimes I have ever committed against him. Attend to the admonition of the Holy Ghost: *Say not, I have sinned and what harm hath befallen me? for the most High is a pa-*

tient rewarder. *Eccl.* v. 4. O God, how basely have I corresponded with thy favours! Thou hast bestowed graces upon me, and I have requited them with injuries: thou hast loaded me with blessings, and I have insulted and dishonoured thee. But for the future it shall not be so. The more thou hast borne with me, so much the more will I love thee. Do thou assist my weakness.

III. The devil will say to thee: "But dost thou not see that thou canst not now resist this temptation?" Answer him: but if I do not resist now, how shall I be able to resist afterwards, when I shall have become weaker, and the divine assistance will fail me? Am I to be told that, in proportion as I multiply the number of my sins, God will multiply the number of his graces towards me? Finally, he will say to thee: "But although thou wert to commit this sin, thou mayest still be saved." Say to him in reply: I may be saved; but is this a reason why I should write my own sentence of condemnation to hell? I may be saved; but I may also be lost, and this is more probable. This is not an affair to be left to the chance of a "may be." But, O Lord, how much hast thou done for me? I have multiplied my faults, and thou hast increased thy graces! The thought of this imbibers my sorrow for having so basely offended thee. My good God, why have I offended thee? O that I could die of grief! Help me, O Jesus, for I desire to be wholly thine. Holy Mary, obtain for me perseverance in virtue, and suffer me not any more to live ungrateful to God who has so much loved me.

Meditation Sixty-third.

On the Resurrection of the Body.

I. A DAY will come, which will be the last of days, when this world will be no more. Before the coming of the Judge, fire will descend from heaven, and consume every thing that is upon the earth: *The earth and the works which are in it shall be burnt up.* 2 St. Peter, iii. 10. So that in that day every thing upon the earth will be reduced to ashes. O God, what will all the vanities of this world then appear, for which so many now sacrifice the salvation of their souls. What appearance will all the highest dignities of this earth then make, its purple its crowns and its sceptres? O the folly of those who shall have loved them! And O the lamentations of those who for the love of such vanities shall have lost their God!

II. *The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again.* 1. Cor. xv. 52. This trumpet will call all men together from their graves to come to judgment. O how beautiful and resplendent will the bodies of the just appear! *Then shall the just shine like the sun!* St. Matt. xiii. 43. On the contrary, how ugly and deformed will the bodies of the reprobate appear! What a torment will it be to these wretched souls to be again united to their bodies, for whose gratification they have lost heaven and lost their God, to be cast with them for ever into hell, there to burn together in eternal flames! Happy shall they then be, who shall have denied their bodies all gratifications displeasing to God; and who, in order to hold them in greater subjection, shall have mortified them by fasting and penance! O Jesus, *turn not thy face away from me*, as I have deserved. How often, for the sake of grati-

fying my senses, have I renounced thy friendship! O that I had died rather than have thus dishonoured thee! Have pity on me.

III. All mankind being assembled together, will be summoned by angels to appear in the valley of Josaphat, there to be publicly judged before all: *Nations, nations in the valley of destruction. Joel, iii. 14.* O my God, and must I appear in that valley? in what place shall I stand there? with the elect in glory, or with the reprobate in chains? My beloved Redeemer, thy precious blood is my only hope. Woe to me, how often have I deserved to be condemned to dwell for ever in hell, far far from thee, without being able to love thee! No, my Jesus, I will love thee for ever, in this life and in the next. Permit me not to be ever again separated from thee by sin. Thou knowest my weakness; be thou always my help, O Jesus, and do not abandon me. Mary, my advocate, obtain for me the gift of holy perseverance.

Meditation Sixty-fourth.

On the love of God in giving us his Son.

I. SO great was God's love for us, that after having loaded us with gifts and graces, he bestowed upon us his own Son: *God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son. St. John, iii. 16.* For us poor miserable worms of the earth, the eternal Father sent his beloved Son into this world to lead a poor and despised life, and to undergo the most ignominious and bitter death, that any mortal on earth had ever suffered, an accumulation of internal as well as external torments, such as to cause him to exclaim when dying: *My God, my God,*

why hast thou forsaken me? O eternal God, who but thyself, who art a God of infinite love, could have bestowed upon us a gift of such infinite value? I love thee, O infinite goodness, I love thee, O infinite love.

II. *He spared not even his own son: but delivered him up for us all.* Rom. viii. 32. But, O God eternal, consider that this divine Son, whom thou dost doom to die, is innocent, and has ever been obedient to thee in all things: thou lovest him even as thyself, how then canst thou condemn him to death for the expiation of our sins? The eternal Father replies: It was precisely because he was my Son, because he was innocent, because he was obedient to me in all things, that it was my will he should lay down his life, in order that you might know the greatness of that love which we both bear towards you. May all creatures for ever praise thee, O God, for the excess of bounty through which thou hast caused thine own Son to die for the deliverance of us thy servants. For the love of this thy Son, have pity on me, pardon me, and save me; and let my salvation be to love thee for ever, both in this world and in the next.

III. *But God, (who is rich in mercy) for his too great charity wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us together in Christ.* Eph. ii. 4. Too great, says the Apostle, too great has been the love of God towards us. We by sin were dead, and he raised us to life again by the death of his Son. But no, such love was not too great for the infinite bounty of our God. Being infinite in all perfection, he was infinite in love. But, O Lord, how comes it that after thou hast shown such love towards men, there are so few who love thee? How much do I desire to become one of the number of these few! Hitherto I have not known thee, my sovereign good, but have forsaken thee; I am sorry for it from the

bottom of my heart, and will so love thee, that though all should leave thee, I will never forsake thee, my God, my love, and my all. O Mary, unite me ever more and more to my dearest Saviour.

Meditation Sixty-fifth.

On labouring in earnest to secure Eternal Salvation.

I. TO be saved it is not sufficient to profess merely to do what is absolutely necessary. If, for example, a person wish to avoid only mortal sins, without making any account of those which are venial, he will easily fall into mortal sins and lose his soul. He who desires to avoid only such dangers as are absolutely the immediate occasions of sin, will most probably one day discover that he has fallen into grievous crimes and is lost. O God, with what attention are the princes of this world served! every thing is avoided that can possibly give them the least offence for fear of losing their favour; but with what carelessness art thou served! Every thing that can endanger the life of the body is shunned with the greatest caution; while the dangers which threaten the life of the soul are not feared! O God, how negligently have I hitherto served thee! Henceforth I will serve thee with the greatest attention; be thou my helper and assist me.

II. Christian Brother, if God should act as sparingly with thee as thou dost with him, what would become of thee? If he should grant thee only grace barely sufficient, wouldst thou be saved? Thou wouldst be able to obtain salvation, but thou wouldst not obtain it; because in this life temptations frequently occur so violent as that it is mor-

ally impossible not to yield to them without a special assistance from God. But God does not afford his special assistance to those who deal sparingly with him: *He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly.* 2 Cor. ix. 6. But, O God, thou hast not dealt sparingly with me: while I have been so ungrateful towards thee as to repay thy many favours with offences, thou, instead of chastising me, hast redoubled thy graces towards me. No, my God, I will never more be ungrateful to thee, as I have hitherto been.

III. To obtain salvation is not an easy task, but difficult and very difficult. We carry about us the rebellious flesh, which allures us to the gratification of sense, and we have moreover numberless enemies to contend with in the world, in hell, and within our own selves, who are ever tempting us to evil. It is true the grace of God is never wanting to us, but still this grace requires us to struggle hard to overcome temptations, and to pray fervently to obtain more powerful assistance, as the danger becomes greater. O Jesus, I desire never more to be separated from thee and deprived of thy love. Hitherto I have been ungrateful to thee, and have turned my back upon thee, but will now love thee with my whole soul, and fear nothing so much as to cease to love thee. Thou knowest my weakness; assist me therefore, thou who art my only hope and confidence. And thou, O ever blessed Virgin Mary, cease not to intercede for me.

Meditation Sixty-sixth.

On the appearance of the body immediately after death.

I. "REMEMBER man that thou art dust, and "into dust thou shalt return." At present thou canst see, feel, speak and move. The day will come when thou wilt no longer see, nor feel, nor speak, nor move. When thy soul shall be separated from thy body, thy body will be consumed by worms and will moulder into dust; and thy soul will go into eternity to be happy or miserable according as thou hast deserved by the actions of thy life. O God, I have deserved only thy displeasure and the punishments of hell; but thou wouldest not have me despair, but repent and love thee and place all my hopes in thee.

II. Figure to thyself the body of one whose soul has just departed. Look on his corpse still remaining on the bed: the head fallen upon the chest, the hair in disorder and still bathed in the cold sweat of death, the eyes sunk, the cheeks fallen in, the face of the colour of ashes, the lips and tongue black; so as to be loathsome and frightful to every beholder. See, dear Christian, to what a state thy body will shortly be reduced which thou now treatest with so much indulgence. O my God, I will no longer resist thy gracious calls. What now remains of the many gratifications with which I have indulged my body, but remorse of conscience which continually torments me? O that I had rather died than ever offended thee!

III. When the body begins to corrupt it becomes still more horrible. Twenty-four hours have scarcely elapsed since that young person died, and already his corpse begins to be offensive. The windows of the apartment must be opened, and perfumes em-

ployed, that the stench may not infect the whole house. His relations and friends are in haste to commit him to the grave. He may have been a person of high rank, and to what does the pampering of his body now serve? It only hastens its corruption and increases its offensiveness. Dearest Redeemer, although I knew that by sin I should greatly offend thee, yet did I commit it. To afford myself a short-lived satisfaction, I was willing to forfeit the invaluable treasure of thy grace. With sorrow do I cast myself prostrate at thy feet; pardon me through the blood which thou hast shed for me. Receive me again into thy favour, and chastise me as thou pleasest. I will willingly accept every chastisement provided I be not deprived of thy love. I love thee, O God, with my whole heart, I love thee more than myself. Grant that I may remain faithful to thee till the end of my life. Mary, my hope, intercede for me.

Meditation Sixty-seventh.

On the state of the body in the grave.

I. CONSIDER now, Christian brother, to what a state thy body will be reduced in the grave. It will first become livid and then black. Mould of a dirty white colour will be produced over the whole surface of the flesh, from which a rotten humour will begin to ooze and flow upon the ground. In this humour a multitude of maggots will be generated, which will feast themselves upon the putrid flesh. Rats and other vermin will join in the feast and prey upon thy poor carcass, some upon the outside while others will enter into the mouth and others into the bowels. See to what a state that

body will be reduced to please which thou hast so often offended God. No, my God, I will never more offend thee. Too many already have been my offences. Enlighten me and strengthen me against temptations.

II. Then will thy hair, cheeks and lips fall off from thy skull ; thy ribs will be first laid bare, and soon after, thy corrupted arms and legs. The worms, after having consumed all thy flesh, will at last be consumed themselves. After this, nothing will remain of thee but a mouldering skeleton, which in time will all fall to pieces ; the head will be separated from the trunk and the bones from one another. See then what man is, considered as a mortal being. O Jesus, have pity on me. For how many years past have I deserved to burn in hell ! I have forsaken thee, my God, but thou hast not yet forsaken me. Pardon me, I beseech thee, and suffer me not any more to abandon thee ; and, when temptations assault me, may I ever have recourse to thee.

III. Behold, finally, that gay young warrior, who a little while ago was considered the life and soul of society ; where is he now ? Enter his house, he dwells there no longer. His bed is occupied by another, and others have already seized and divided his spoils and armour. If thou wouldest see him, look into that newly-made grave and thou shalt behold a putrid mass of corruption, horrible and offensive. Saints of God, happy indeed are you, who, for the love of God, whom alone you loved in this world, were wise enough to mortify your bodies ; now your bones are honoured upon altars, and your souls happy in the enjoyment of God face to face. Your bodies at the last day will again be united to your souls, to be your companions in bliss as they were formerly your companions in suffering. O God, I do not lament, but rejoice, that this my

flesh, for which I have so often offended thee, will one day be given to rottenness and worms: but I do indeed lament the crimes I have committed against thee, for thou art infinite goodness. O Jesus, I love thee, and will never never more offend thee. Mary, mother of God, pray for me.

Meditation Sixty-eighth.

On being quickly forgotten after death.

I. A YOUNG person is dead, early in life. A little while ago he was courted in conversation and everywhere welcomed by all; but now that he is dead, he is become the horror of those who behold him. His parents are in haste to get him out of the house, and call in bearers to carry him to the grave. How wretched; if to satisfy his parents or others of this world, he has lost God! My dear Redeemer, though all may forget me thou wilt still remember me, for thou hast given thy life for my salvation. Oh that I had never offended thee!

II. A little while ago the fame of his wit, gracefulness, urbanity and facetiousness was spread far and wide; but now that he is dead he is almost out of mind and will soon be quite forgotten. Upon hearing the news of his death, some may remark of him: "He did himself great credit;" others may exclaim: "Oh, how grievous! What a clever, facetious and delightful man he was!" Some may grieve for him because he was pleasant or useful to them: while others may perhaps rejoice, because his death may be of advantage to them: but in a short time no one will so much as mention him. Even his parents and nearest relations do not like to hear him spoken of, that their grief for him may

not be renewed ; and hence in visits of condolence every thing is made the subject of conversation but the person who is dead, and if any one begins to allude to him, he is immediately stopped with an exclamation : " Pray do not mention him to me !" See what becomes of the affection of our parents and friends for us in this world ! My God, I am content that thou alone shouldst love me, and will for the future love only thee.

III. Your relations will at first be afflicted at your death, but it will not be long before they will console themselves with the portion of your property which may fall to their lot ; and in the same room in which your soul departed and was judged by Jesus Christ, they will feast, jest, dance and laugh as before ; and who shall know where your soul will be ? Give me, O Lord, time to lament the offences I have committed against thee before thou summonest me to judgment. I will no longer resist thy calls : who knows but that this meditation may be the last call I may receive ! I confess that I have deserved hell, and as many hells as I have committed mortal sins ; but thou wilt not despise poor penitent sinners. I am sincerely sorry with my whole soul for having abused thy infinite goodness by sensual gratifications. Forgive me and grant me grace to obey thee and to love thee till the end of my life. O Mary, I place myself under your protection, and confide in your holy intercession.

Meditation Sixty-ninth.

On the appearance of all Mankind in the Valley of Josaphat.

I. *THE angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the just.* St. Matt. xiii. 49. What would be the confusion of a person who, on entering into a church in the presence of a great concourse of people should be forcibly expelled as one excommunicated! Alas, how much greater will the ignominy of the reprobate be to see themselves in the day of judgment expelled from the company of the saints in presence of all mankind! In this life the wicked are honoured equally with the saints, and frequently more. But in that day, when the figure of this world shall be passed away, the elect shall be placed on the right hand, and caught up into the air to meet Jesus Christ, advancing to place crowns of glory on their heads, according to that of the Apostle: *Then shall we be taken up together with them in the clouds to meet Christ into the air.* Thes. iv. 16. But the wicked, surrounded by their tormentors, the infernal spirits, shall be placed on the left hand, waiting for the appearance of the judge coming publicly to condemn them. O foolish worldlings, you who now hold the lives of the saints in derision and contempt,—in the valley of Josaphat, you will change your sentiments. There will you acknowledge your folly, but it will be too late.

II. Oh what a splendid appearance will the saints make, on that day, who have forsaken all for God! How beautiful will be the appearance of the many young persons, who, despising the riches and delights of the world, have shut themselves up in deserts or in cloisters, to attend only to their eternal salvation! And of the many martyrs who

were so much despised and so cruelly tortured by the tyrants of this world! All these shall be proclaimed courtiers of Jesus Christ in his heavenly glory. On the contrary, what a horrible appearance will a Herod make, or a Pilate, a Nero, or many others, who made so great a figure in this world, but died under God's displeasure! O Jesus, I embrace thy holy cross. What are riches, what are honours, what is the whole world? Besides thee, what do I desire!

III. Christian, what will be thy station at the last day? the right hand or the left? If thou wouldest occupy the right, thou must walk in the way which conducts thither; it is impossible to keep the way to the left, and at length arrive at the right. O Lamb of God, who didst come into the world to take away our sins, have pity on me. I am sorry for having offended thee, and will love thee above all things; suffer me not to offend thee any more. I seek not worldly goods; give me only thy grace and thy love, and I ask for nothing more. O Mary, you are my refuge and my hope.

Meditation Seventieth.

On the blindness of those who say, if we be lost we shall not be lost alone.

I. **W**HAT sayest thou? that if thou go to hell thou shalt not go alone? But what consolation will the company of the wicked be to thee in hell? Every condemned soul in hell weeps and laments, saying: although I am condemned to suffer for ever, would that I might suffer alone! The wretched company which thou wilt meet with there will increase thy torments by their despairing groans and moanings.

What a torment to hear even a dog howling all night long, or an infant crying, for five or six hours, and not to be able to sleep ! And what shall it be to hear the yells and howlings of so many wretched souls in despair, who will continually torment one another with their dismal noises, and this, not for one night, nor for many many nights only, but for all eternity !

II. Again, thy companions will but increase the torments of hell, by the stench of their burning carcasses. *Out of their carcasses*, saith the prophet Isaias, *shall a stench arise.* xxxiv. 3. They are called carcasses, not because they are dead, for they are alive to pain, but because of the stench which they will emit. Thy companions will also increase the torments of hell by their numbers ; they will be in that pit as grapes in the wine-press of the anger of God : *He treadeth*, saith St. John, *the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of God the Almighty.* Apc. xix. 15. They will be straitened on every side, so as to be unable to move hand or foot, so long as God shall be God.

III. O accursed sin ! how canst thou so blind men who are gifted with reason ? Sinners who affect to despise damnation, are yet most careful to preserve their goods, their situations, and their health ; they do not say : If I lose my property, my place, my health, I shall not be the only one who will lose such things. Yet when the soul is at stake, they say : "If I be lost, I shall not be lost "alone !" He who loses the good things of this world and saves his soul, will find a recompense for all he has lost ; but he who loses his soul, what indemnity shall he find ? *What shall he give in exchange for his soul ?* St. Matt. xvi. 26. O my God, enlighten me and do not forsake me. How often have I sold my soul to the devil, and exchanged thy grace and favour for a wretched transitory in-

dulgence of sense ! I am sorry, O God, for having thus dishonoured thy infinite majesty. My God, I love thee : suffer me not to lose thee any more. O Mary, mother of God, deliver me from hell, and from the guilt of sin, by your holy intercession.

Meditation Seventy-first.

On the measure of grace.

I. THERE is a certain measure beyond which God does not bestow his graces upon us. We should therefore be very much afraid of abusing any of the graces which our Lord dispenses to us. Every grace, every light, every call, may be the last we shall receive from God, and by despising it we may lose our souls. O my God, thou hast already bestowed too many graces upon me, and too often have I abused them. Have mercy on me, and do not yet abandon me.

II. This measure is not the same for all persons : but for some greater, for others less. Christian brother, think how many graces thou hast received from God : and if thou continue to abuse them, wilt thou be saved ? Reflect that the more abundant the graces have been which God has granted thee, the more shouldst thou fear lest he abandon thee in thy sins, and the more shouldst thou be resolved upon a change of life. It may be that by one more mortal sin thou mayest close against thee the gates of mercy, and ruin thy soul for ever. And it may not be so. But thou shouldst very much fear lest it should be so. And miserable art thou if thou dost not thus fear. No, my God, I desire never more to lose thee. Whenever the devil shall tempt me, I will have recourse to thee, my Jesus ;

I know that thou art ever ready to assist those who fly to thee for help.

III. The greater the graces, the greater is the ingratitude of him who abuses them. The graces which thou hast received should induce thee to hope that the Lord will pardon thee if thou amend thy life and remain faithful to him for the future. But they should also make thee fear lest God should condemn thee to hell, if after so many offences thou continue still to provoke him by sin. O God, I give thee thanks for not having even yet forsaken me: the light which thou at present impartest to me, the displeasure which I feel for having offended thee, the desire which I have to love thee and to continue in thy grace, are certain signs that thou hast not yet abandoned me. And since thou hast not abandoned me after so many sins, I desire never more to abandon thee, who art the God of my soul. I love thee above all things, and because I love thee, I am sorry for having despised thee. Through thy sacred passion I beseech thee, O Jesus, to grant me perseverance. Holy Mary, queen of mercy, take me under your protection.

Meditation Seventy-second.

On loving God because he has died for us.

I. *HE loved me*, saith the Apostle, *and delivered himself for me.* Gal. ii. 20. When was a master ever known to lay down his life for the love of his servant? or a king for the love of his slave? And yet it is certainly true that my Creator, the Lord of heaven and earth, the Son of God, has of his own will laid down his life for the love of me his vile and ungrateful creature. St. Bernard says: "He

"spared not himself that he might spare his servant." To pardon me, he would not pardon himself, but condemned himself to die in torments upon a cross. I believe, O Jesus, that thou hast died for me, and how has it been possible for me to have lived so many years without loving thee?

II. But, my Redeemer, thou hast given thy life not only for a vile creature, but for a rebellious and ungrateful creature, who has oftentimes turned his back upon thee, and for some base gratification renounced thy grace and thy love. Thou hast sought by the most endearing motives to make me love thee; and I have sought to make thee hate me and condemn me to hell. Nevertheless that same love which induced thee to die for me, now induces me to hope that thou wilt not reject me if I return to thee. Pardon me, O Jesus, I am sensible of the wrong which I have done thee; and I know also the wrong I should still do thee, were I to love thee only in a slight degree: no, I will love thee to the utmost of my power; too much hast thou deserved such a love: grant me thy help and assistance.

III. Ah my Saviour, what more couldst thou have done to gain my heart, than thou hast done by dying for my sake? What greater love couldst thou have shown for thy friend, than to die for the love of him? *Greater love than this no man hath. that a man lay down his life for his friends.* St. John xv. 13. Since then, O Word incarnate, thou canst do nothing more to make me love thee, shall I continue to be ungrateful to thee? No, death is approaching, and is perhaps very near me, and I will not die so ungrateful to thee as I hitherto have been. I love thee, my beloved Jesus. Thou hast given thyself entirely to me; I will give myself entirely to thee. Bind and straighten me with the bonds of thy love, so that I may live and die in the love

of thy infinite goodness. O sacred Mother, Mary, take me under your protection, and teach me to burn with the love of your divine Son, who died on the cross for the love of me.

Meditation Seventy-third.

On carefully attending to our Salvation.

I. THE devil makes salvation appear to some too difficult to be accomplished, in order to dishearten them and induce them to abandon themselves to a disorderly life. It is true, that if to obtain salvation it were necessary to retire into a desert, or to shut one's self up in a cloister, we ought to do so. But these extraordinary means are not necessary; ordinary means are sufficient, such as the frequentation of the sacraments, the avoiding of dangerous occasions, and the frequently recommending ourselves by prayer to God. At our death we shall see that these things were easy; hence will our remorse be very great if until then we shall have neglected them.

II. We should resolve and say: "I will save my "soul cost what it may," Perish all things else, property, friends and even life itself, if I can but only save my soul! Let us never think we can do too much to obtain eternal salvation. Eternity is at stake, the being happy or miserable for ever. "No security can be too great," says St. Bernard, "where eternity is at stake." O God, I am ashamed to appear before thee; how often for a mere nothing have I turned my back upon thee! No, I will never more forfeit thy grace, nor wilfully become thine enemy. "In thee, O Lord, have I "hoped; let me not be confounded for ever." I

would rather a thousand times lose my life than lose thy friendship.

III. If during the past we have forfeited salvation, we must now endeavour to remedy the evil; we must change our lives, and this without delay. It is to no purpose to say I will do so in a short time. Hell is filled with souls who formerly said the same; but death surprised them, and prevented their proceedings. What a favour would God bestow upon a dying man on the point of breathing his last, were he to grant him one more year, or even one more month? Christian brother, at this very time, God bestows such a favour upon thee, and what use dost thou make of it? Why, O God, do I delay? Do I wait for the period when there will be no more time for me, and when I shall find that I have in reality done nothing for thee? I have the consolation of being as yet assisted by thy grace. I love thee above every good, and desire rather to die than to offend thee. But thou knowest my weakness, and the many treasons I have been guilty of against thee; help me, O Jesus; in thee do I place all my hopes; and to you, O Mary, Mother of God, do I fly for protection.

Meditation Seventy-fourth.

On leaving all in Death.

I. CHRISTIANS are well aware that they must die, yet for the most part they live as though they were never to die. If after this life there were no other life, if there were neither hell nor heaven, could they think less of death than they now do? If, dear Christian, thou desire to live well, endeavour to spend the remainder of thy days in the

continual remembrance of death. Oh how correctly does he judge of things, and how rightly does he direct all his actions, who performs them with a view to his departure hence! The remembrance of death destroys in him all affection to the good things of this world, by reminding him that he must soon leave them all behind him. O God, since thou givest me time to remedy the evil which I have done, make known to me thy will, and I will do all that thou requirest of me.

II. If a traveller, on his journey to his own country, were to stop and spend his all in building a palace in a land through which he ought only to pass, and neglect to provide a dwelling for himself in that country in which he was to reside his whole life, he would be thought mad. And must not the Christian be deemed mad, who thinks only of gratifying himself in this world, through which he has only to pass during a few days, and heeds not the danger of being miserable in the next, where he must live for ever, as long as God shall be God? Woe to me, O God, if thou hadst called me out of life in my sins! I thank thee for having borne with me with such great patience. Never suffer me to be again separated from thee. My God, my sovereign good, I do and will love thee above all things.

III. Death will rob us of all things. Whatever we may have acquired in this world, we must leave all behind us at our death. Nothing will then be allowed us but a coffin and a shroud, which will soon moulder away and become dust with our bodies. We must then leave the house which we now inhabit, and a dismal grave must be the dwelling place of our bodies until the day of judgment, when they must go either to heaven or to hell, accordingly as our souls have gone before them. All things will therefore end with me in death. Then shall I find that nothing will remain for me but

the little which I have done for God. And were I to die this moment, what should I find that I have done for thee, my Jesus? For what do I delay? that death may come and find me thus miserable? No, my God, I will amend my life. I detest all the offences I have ever committed against thee. For the future I will not seek to gratify my own inclinations, but solely to do thy will, who art the God of my soul. I love thee, O infinite goodness, I love thee above all things; mercifully grant me thy grace. And do you also, Mary, Mother of God, pray to your divine Son for me.

Meditation Seventy-fifth.

On the moment of death.

I. IMAGINE thyself, dear Christian, just now dead, and thy soul entered into eternity. If now thou hadst just departed from this world, what wouldst thou not wish to have done for life eternal? But what would such wishes avail thee, if thou hadst not spent the days of thy mortal life in serving God? If thou wouldst now prevent that which thou hast time to prevent, place thyself in imagination frequently for the future in thy grave, or rather upon thy death-bed; imagine thyself to be dying, on the point of breathing thy last, listen to the reproaches of thy conscience and delay not to silence them by repentance. Delay not, for thou hast no time to lose. Ah my God! Enlighten me, make known to me the way in which I should walk, and I will obey thee in all things.

II. St. Camillus de Lellis, looking at the graves of the dead was accustomed to say: "If those who "are here interred could now return to life again,

“ what would they not do to become saints! And “ I who have time at my disposal, what do I do for “ God ? ” Thus did this Saint animate himself to become more and more closely united to his Lord. Know then, dear Christian, that the time which God in his mercy now grants thee, is of the greatest value. Do not wait for time to labour for thy salvation until thou art gone into eternity, or until the arrival of that awful moment, when it shall be said to thee: “ Depart, Christian soul, out of this “ world ; ” make haste to go forth, for there is no more time for thee to labour: what is done is done. O Jesus, remember that I am the lost sheep for which thou hast laid down thy life. “ We beseech “ thee, therefore, help thy servants, whom thou “ hast redeemed with thy precious blood.” Give me light and grace to do that now, which I shall wish to have done at the hour of my death.

III. O eternal God, I tremble at the thought of being that unhappy tree, of which thou hast said: *Behold for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none. Cut it down therefore, why cumbereth it the ground.* St. Luke, xiii. 7. Yet so it is, O Lord ; for the many years I have now lived upon this earth, what good have I hitherto done? What fruit have I borne thee, all this time, but sin and bitterness? Alas! how have I deserved to have dwelt long ago in hell! Dearest Redeemer, spare me yet a little longer, I will not be obstinate, death shall never find me in the state in which I now am. I will deplore and detest the days which I have spent in offending thee, and will pass the remainder of my life in loving and honouring thy infinite goodness. I do and will love thee, my sovereign good. Take not thy help away from me. And you, O blessed Virgin Mary, deprive me not of your powerful protection.

Meditation Seventy-sixth.

On the examination of our sins at the last day.

I. BEHOLD the heavens will open, and the angels and saints will descend to assist at the judgment, followed by the Queen of heaven, the ever blessed Virgin; and after her will appear the eternal Judge of the living and of the dead, encompassed with great power and majesty. The appearance of Jesus will be to the just, the greatest consolation; but to the wicked, the indignant countenance of the Son of God will be horror and confusion worse than hell itself. *They will say to the mountains: fall upon us, and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb.* Apoc. vi. 6. They will desire that the mountains may immediately fall upon them rather than behold the indignant countenance of the Lamb, that is, of the Redeemer, who in their life-time was as a lamb towards them, in silently bearing with their repeated injuries against him. O Jesus, thou who wilt one day be my Judge, I am heartily sorry for having so grievously offended thee. Pardon me my sins, and grant that when thou appearest as my Judge I may not behold thee indignant against me.

II. *The judgment sat, and the books were opened.* Dan. vii. 10. Then will it be impossible to conceal our sins; Jesus himself, who will be our Judge, having long-ago witnessed them, will manifest them to the whole world. *He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness.* 1 Cor. iv. 5. Even the most secret sins, the most abominable impurities, and cruelties the most horrible, he will make known to all mankind. O my Redeemer, thou who already knowest all my iniquities, have mercy on me now, before the time of mercy end.

III. In a word, Jesus Christ will on that day make himself known as the great Lord of all : *The Lord shall be known*, says the Psalmist, *when he executeth judgment*. *Ps. ix. 17*. At present more account is made of some pleasure, of a mere vapour, of a fit of passion, than of God. Hence will the Judge then justly say to the sinner : *To whom have ye likened me, or made me equal?* *Isa. xl. 26*. To what hast thou compared me and postponed me ? Have thy base inclinations, or a mere caprice, prevailed with thee more than my grace ? O God, what shall we then answer to such reproaches ? Oh, how will our utter confusion close our mouths ! But let us now answer and say : O Jesus, I know that thou wilt one day be my Judge, but now thou art my Saviour. Remember that thou hast died for me. I am sorry with my whole heart for having despised thee, my sovereign good. But if hitherto I have despised thee, behold I now esteem and love thee more than myself, and am willing to die for thy love. O Jesus, pardon me, and never suffer me to live any more deprived of thy love. Mary, most gracious advocate of sinners, help me now whilst I can yet receive your powerful assistance.

Meditation Seventy-seventh.

On the great love of God for our souls.

I. THE love which God bears our souls is eternal and infinite. *I have loved thee with an everlasting love*. *Jer. xxxi. 3*. So that God has from all eternity loved every human soul. For the salvation of souls he placed all other creatures in the world : *All things for the sake of the elect*. *2 Tim. ii. 10*. And lastly he sent his only Son into the world,

made man for our sakes, to die upon the cross for the salvation of our souls. Thou, O God, hast indeed loved me from all eternity, and hast died for me, and how could I ever so grievously offend thee?

II. The only begotten Son of God, for the love of our souls, came down from heaven to free them from eternal death by his own death upon the cross; and having redeemed them with his blood, he called his angels to rejoice with him for the recovery of his lost sheep: *Rejoice with me, because I have found the sheep that was lost.* St. Luke xv. 69. Dearest Redeemer, thou didst come to seek me, and how have I hitherto fled away from thee! No, my Jesus, I will no more fly from thee. I will love thee; and oh! do thou so bind me to thee by thy holy love that I may live and die in thy sacred embraces.

III. The eternal Father has then given his Son, and the divine Son has given his precious blood and life for the salvation of my soul; and how often have I withdrawn myself from God and sold myself for something worse than nothing to his and my mortal enemy the devil! Verily, my God, thou hast spared nothing to save me from being lost, while I, for the sake of some paltry gratification, have many many times renounced thy friendship and love. Thou hast borne with me, that I might have time to bewail my sins and to love thee, the God of my soul. I will therefore love thee, my only good, and will grieve above every evil for having so often offended thee. Oh! suffer me not to be any more separated from thy love. Remind me continually how much thou hast done for my salvation, and how great has been the love which thou hast shown me, that I may never cease to love thee, my treasure, my life, and my all. Grant that I may ever love thee, and then dispose of me as thou pleasest. Mary, Mother of God, your divine

Son denies you nothing ; recommend to him, I beseech you, my sinful soul.

Meditation Seventy-eighth.

On the remorse of the reprobate.

I. THE condemned soul is tormented with three kinds of remorse. The first arises from reflecting for what a mere trifle she has incurred everlasting misery. For how long does the pleasure of sin last ? only for a moment. To a man at the point of death how long does his past life appear ? a mere moment. But to one in hell, what do the fifty or sixty years of his sojourning upon the earth appear, when, in the gulf of eternity, he foresees that after a hundred or a thousand millions of years, he will be only beginning eternity ? Alas ! does he exclaim, for a few moments of indulgence in poisonous pleasures, which I did but just taste, I must for ever suffer, lament and despair in this fiery furnace, abandoned by all, as long as God shall be God. O my God I give thee thanks for thy great mercy to me, and implore thee still to have mercy on me.

II. The second kind of remorse arises from the condemned soul's reflecting on the little which she need have done to be saved, but did not do it ; and that now there is no remedy. Alas ! does she say, if I had frequently confessed my sins, given myself to prayer, restored that ill-gotten property, pardoned my enemies, avoided that dangerous occasion, I should not have been lost. What would it have cost me ? Although it might have cost me much, yet I ought to have been most willing to do my utmost to be saved. But I did not do it, and

now I am lost for ever. With how many inspirations did God favour me! How many times did he call me and admonish me that unless I desisted I should certainly be lost! I might then have remedied my past iniquity, but now I have no remedy. Ah! how does this thought afflict the wretched soul, even more than the fire and all the other torments of hell, that she might have been happy for ever, but now must be miserable for all eternity. O Jesus, it is now the time of mercy, do thou mercifully pardon me. I love thee, my sovereign good, and am exceedingly sorry for having ever despised thee.

III. The third and most bitter kind of remorse arises from the wretched soul's being sensible of the great happiness which she has forfeited through her own fault. She recollects that God afforded her abundant means of gaining heaven, that he died for her salvation, permitted her to be born in the bosom of the true Church, and bestowed upon her numberless graces, and she reflects that all have been rendered useless through her own fault. I am lost, she exclaims, and neither the merits of Jesus Christ, nor the intercession of the Mother of God, nor the prayers of the saints, are of any avail to me; every gleam of hope is vanished from me for ever. Oh that I had died, my God, rather than ever offended thee! Receive me now into thy favour; I love thee, and will love thee for ever. Mary, most gracious advocate of sinners, intercede for me.

Meditation Seventy-ninth.

On Jesus, the King of love.

I. ST. FULGENTIUS, contemplating the infant Jesus flying into Egypt from the hands of Herod, who through fear of losing his kingdom sought the infant's life, tenderly exclaims: "Why art thou thus troubled, O Herod? The King who is just now born, comes not to overthrow other kings by force of arms, but to subjugate them by dying for them." As though he had said: The King of heaven is not come to conquer us by war, but by love; he is not come to put us to death, but to rescue us from death by dying for us. Hence it is that Jesus may indeed be styled the King of love. Oh! that I had always loved thee, O Jesus, my sovereign King, and had never offended thee. Thou didst spend thirty-three years in pain and labour to save me from being lost, and I have wilfully renounced thee, my sovereign good, for the sake of momentary pleasures. Father of mercy, forgive me, and embrace me with the kiss of peace.

II. Ungrateful Jews! why did you refuse to acknowledge for your king one so lovely and so loving towards you? Why did you exclaim: "*We have no king but Cæsar?*" Cæsar did not love you, nor desire to die for you: while your true King had descended from heaven upon the earth to die for the love of you. Oh sweet Saviour, if others will not receive thee as their King, I will have no other King but thee: "Thou art my King." I know that thou alone lovest me; thou alone hast redeemed me with thy blood; where then shall I find one who has loved me as thou hast loved me? I am grieved for having hitherto rejected thee as

my King, by losing my respect for thee and rebelling against thee. Pardon me, O Jesus, my King, for thou hast died to purchase pardon for me.

III. *To this end Christ died and rose again; that he might be Lord of the dead and of the living.* Rom. xiv. 9. My beloved King, dearest Jesus, since thou camest upon the earth to gain our hearts to thyself, if hitherto I have resisted thy loving calls, I will now no longer resist them. Do not disdain to accept of me; I now give myself to thee, I give thee my whole self. Take, O King, possession of my whole will, and of my whole self; make me faithful to thee; and grant that I may rather die than betray thee any more, my King, my love and my only good. O Queen and Mother of my King, O Mary, obtain for me that fidelity which I this day promise to your divine Son.

Meditation Eightieth.

On the miserable death of the sinner.

I. POOR unhappy being! see how he is oppressed with sorrows! Alas! he is now about to die; a cold sweat is stealing over him, his breath is failing him, and he frequently faints away; and when come to himself, his head is so far gone and so weak, that he can attend but to very little, understand but little, and speak but little. But the worst is, although he is drawing near his end, instead of thinking of the account he must shortly render to God, he thinks only of his medical attendants, and of the remedies they may be able to afford him to save him from death. And those who stand around him, instead of exhorting him to unite himself to God, flatter him by telling him that he is

better, or say not a word, that they may not disturb him. O my God, deliver me from such an unhappy end.

II. But at last the priest admonishes him of his approaching dissolution, saying to him: "You are "now, dear brother, in a state of great danger, and "must bid farewell to the world; give yourself "then to God, and receive his holy sacraments." On hearing this fatal announcement, how dreadfully is he agitated, what sadness and remorse of conscience overwhelm him, and how dreadful is the conflict which he suffers! All the sins he has committed appear in confusion before him, the inspirations which he has neglected, his broken promises, and the many years of his past life now lost and gone for ever, all rush upon his mind. He now opens his eyes to the truths of eternity, of which during his past life he made but very little account. Oh God, what terror do the thoughts of thy anger, of death, of judgment, of hell and eternity, strike into his unhappy soul! O Jesus, have pity on me and pardon me; do not abandon me. I am sensible of the evil I have done in despising thee, and would willingly die for thy love. Assist me, O God, to begin now at least a new life.

III. The dying sinner exclaims: "Oh what "great folly have I been guilty of! How have I "squandered away my life! I might have been a "saint, and I would not; and now, what can I do? "My head wanders, and fear oppresses me and will "not suffer me to bring my mind to any one good "work! In a few moments what will become of "me? Dying in this manner how can I be saved?" He wishes for time to make his peace effectually with God, but time is no longer his. "Alas," he cries out, "this cold sweat is a sure symptom of the "near approach of death; I begin to lose my sight "and my breath; I can no longer move, I can

“hardly speak.” And thus, in the midst of so much confusion, despondency and fear, his soul departs from his body and appears before Jesus Christ. O my Jesus, thy death is my hope. I love thee above every good, and because I love thee, I am sorry for having offended thee. Mary, mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.

Meditation Eighty-first.

On the happy death of the just man.

I. TO the just man death is not a punishment but a reward: it is not dreaded by him but desired. How can it be dreadful to him, if it is to terminate all his pains, afflictions, and conflicts, and all danger of losing God? Those words, “Depart, “Christian soul, out of this world,” which strike such terror into the soul of the sinner, fill the soul that loves God with joy. The just man is not afflicted at leaving the good things of this world, because God has always been his only good; nor at leaving honours, because he has always regarded them as smoke: nor at being separated from his friends and relations, because he has always loved them in God and for God. Hence, as in life he frequently exclaimed: “My God and my all;” he now repeats the same in death, with ecstacies of delight; the time being at hand for him to return to his God who made him, to love him face to face for ever and ever in heaven.

II. The sorrows of death do not afflict him, he even rejoices to sacrifice the last remnants of his life as a testimony of his love for God, uniting the sufferings of his death with the sufferings of Jesus when dying on the cross. The thought that the

time of sin and the danger of losing God are now past, overwhelms him with delight. The devil fails not to suggest to his mind thoughts of despondency at the recollection of his past sins; but as he has for many years bewailed them, and loved Jesus Christ with his whole heart, he is not dismayed, but comforted. O Jesus, how good and faithful art thou to a soul that seeks and loves thee!

III. As the sinner, who dies in mortal sin, experiences in the internal troubles and rage which he suffers in death, a foretaste of hell; so does the just man experience in death a foretaste of heaven. His acts of confidence and of the love of God, and his ardent desire to see God, afford him a beginning of that happiness which is soon to be completed for him in heaven. With what gladness does he welcome the holy Viaticum when brought into his chamber! He exclaims like St. Philip Neri when he was on his death-bed: "Because I have offended "thee, my God, I will say to thee with St. Bernard: " *Thy wounds are my merits.*" O my God, if I am in thy grace, as I hope I am, grant me soon to die, that I may presently behold and love thee face to face, and be secure of never more losing thee. Mary, my Mother, obtain for me a holy death.

Meditation Eighty-second.

On being at the point of death.

I. IF now thou wert at the point of death, already in thy agony and almost breathing thy last, and about soon to appear before the divine tribunal, what wouldest thou not wish to have done for God? And what wouldest thou not give for a little more time to make thy salvation more secure? Woe

to me, if I do not make use of the light that is now given me, and amend my life! *He hath called against me the time.* Lam. i. 15. The time which is now granted me by the mercy of God, will be a great torment and a subject of bitter remorse to me at the hour of death, when time for me will be no more. O Jesus, thou didst spend thy whole life for my salvation, and I have been many years in the world, and yet what have I hitherto done for thee? Alas! all that I have done gives me only pain and remorse of conscience.

II. Christian, God now gives thee time, be then resolved: in what wilt thou spend it? What dost thou wait for? Dost thou wait to see that light which will show thee thy wretched neglect, when there will be no remedy? Dost thou wait to hear that "Go forth" which must be obeyed without demur? O my God, I will no longer abuse the light which thou affordest me; but which I have hitherto so much abused. I thank thee for this fresh admonition, which may be the last thou wilt ever give me. But since at present thou thus enlightenest me, it is a mark that thou hast not yet abandoned me, and art desirous of showing me mercy. My beloved Saviour, I am sorry above all things for having so often despised thy graces and neglected thy calls and inspirations. I promise with thy help never more to offend thee.

III. O God, how many Christians die in the greatest uncertainty as to their salvation, and tormented with the thought, that they have had time to serve thee, and are now arrived at the end of their life, when no more time is left them for any good works! They are sensible that now all that remains to them is to render a strict account of the many graces and inspirations bestowed upon them by God, and know not what to answer. O Lord, I will not die under such a torment. Say what

thou requirest of me, make known to me the way of life in which I should walk, and I will obey thee in all things. Hitherto I have despised thy commands, but I am now sorry for it with my whole heart, and love thee above all things. O Mary, refuge of sinners, recommend my soul to your divine Son.

Meditation Eighty-third.

On the rashness of the sinner in committing mortal sin.

I. GOD cannot but hate mortal sin, because mortal sin is directly opposed to his divine will: "Sin," says St. Bernard, "would destroy the divine will." As he cannot but hate mortal sin, so he cannot but hate the sinner who identifies himself with sin and rebels against his God: *To God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike.* *Wisd.* xiv. 9. How great then is the rashness of the sinner in committing sin, when he knows that by so doing he shall bring upon himself the hatred of God! O my God, have mercy on me; thou hast distinguished me with many graces, and I have repaid thee with numerous offences, no one has so grievously offended thee as I have done. Grant me, for thy mercy's sake, contrition for my sins.

II. God is that all-powerful being who by a single act of his will created all things: "*He commanded and they were made.*" And he can in like manner, by a single act of his will, destroy all that he has created, whenever he pleases: *At a beck he can utterly destroy the whole world.* *2 Mac.* viii. 18. And shall the sinner have the hardihood to put himself in opposition to this omnipotent God and make him his enemy? *He hath stretched out his hand,* says holy Job, *against God, and hath strength-*

ened himself against the Almighty. Job xv. 25. What should we think of an ant pretending to fight against an armed soldier? And what ought to be said of me, O eternal God, who have so often dared to oppose myself to thee, making no account of thy power, and sensible that I was drawing down thy anger upon me? But thy holy passion, O Jesus, gives me confidence to hope in thee for pardon, who didst die to obtain forgiveness for me.

III. The rashness of the sinner increases when we reflect that he offends God before his own eyes: *He provoketh me to anger before my face.* Isa. xliv. 3. What subject had ever the audacity to break the laws in the presence of the king himself? But the sinner knows that God beholds him, and yet he does not hesitate to commit sin before him. My dear Redeemer, I am that audacious being who has dared to despise thy holy precepts before thy face. I have therefore deserved hell; but thou art my Saviour, who camest to take away the sins of the world and to save poor sinners: *The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* St. Luke xviii. 10. How much am I grieved for having offended thee! Thou hast given me many proofs of thy love, and I have returned thee as many injuries. O Jesus, put an end to my sins, and replenish me with thy love. I love thee, O infinite love, and tremble at the thought of being ever again deprived of thy love. Permit it not, O God, rather let me die. O Mary, you obtain whatever you ask of God, obtain for me the gift of holy perseverance.

Meditation Eighty-fourth.

On the parable of the Prodigal Son.

I. ST. LUKE writes (*chap. xv.*) that an ungrateful son, disdaining to remain in subjection to his father, went one day to him to demand from him his inheritance, that he might live as he pleased; and having obtained it, turned his back upon his father and went his way to live in vice in a far distant country. This prodigal son is a figure of the sinner, who, abusing the liberty which God has granted him, forsakes God, and lives in iniquity far away from him. O my Lord, and my Father, this is what I have done, when to satisfy my capricious desires I have so often forsaken thee, to live at a distance from thee, deprived of thy grace.

II. But as it happened to the prodigal son, that, having left his father, he was reduced to such great misery that he was unable to satisfy himself with the husks which the swine refused to eat; so does it happen to the sinner. When he forsakes God, he can no where find contentment nor peace; because, at a distance from God, all the pleasures of the earth cannot satisfy his heart. The prodigal son, seeing himself reduced to such a state of misery, said within himself: "*I will arise and go to my father.*" Do thou, Christian, in like manner: arise from the filth of sin and return to thy heavenly Father, who will not reject thee. Yes, my God, my Father, I confess that I have done evil in forsaking thee; I am sorry for it and repent of it with my whole heart; O do not cast me off now that I return to thee penitent, and resolved never more to depart from before thy feet. My dear Father, forgive me, pardon me, give me the kiss of peace and receive me into thy favour.

III. The prodigal son, on his return, cast himself with humility at his father's feet and said : “*Father, I am not worthy to be called thy son.*” Upon which, his father embraced him with tenderness, and forgetting all his past ingratitude, welcomed him with the greatest affection, and was overjoyed at regaining his son who was lost. Most tender Father, suffer me to cast myself with sorrow at thy feet, for my multiplied offences against thee. I am not worthy to be called thy son, having so many times forsaken and despised thee ; but I know that thou art so good a parent that thou wilt not reject a repentant child. If hitherto I have not loved thee, I will now love thee above all things, and will willingly undergo any suffering for thy love. Assist me with thy holy grace that I may ever remain faithful to thee. O Mary, God is my Father, you are my Mother ; be not forgetful of me.

Meditation Eighty-fifth.

On the evil of lukewarmness.

I. GREAT indeed is the evil which tepidity occasions in the souls of those who, while they have a dread of being in a state of mortal sin, make but little account of deliberate venial sins, and take no pains to avoid them. God threatens the lukewarm to vomit them out of his mouth : *Because thou art lukewarm I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.* *Apoc. iii. 16.* This means rejection on the part of God : and what is once rejected, in the way here mentioned, is never received again. The tepid Christian dishonours God by showing in his conduct that he does not consider God deserving of being served with the greatest attention. Yes, my

God, I have indeed hitherto dishonoured thee in this manner: but I will now amend my life; do thou help and support me.

II. St. Teresa never fell into any grievous sin, as is related in the bull of her canonization, yet it was revealed to her that a place was prepared for her in hell if she did not shake off her tepidity. How was this? since it is only mortal sin that is punished in hell? The Holy Spirit supplies the answer, where he says: *He that despiseth small things, shall fall by little and little.* Eccl. xix. 1. He who makes no account of deliberate venial sins, will easily fall into those which are mortal: because by habitually offending Almighty God in small things, he will not have much dread of sometimes offending him in great things: and because by continually withdrawing himself from God, he provokes God not to afford him those special helps without which he will easily be overcome by powerful temptations. Abandon me not, O Lord, to such a misfortune; grant that I may rather die; have pity on me.

III. *He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly.* 2 Cor. ix. 6. With justice does God withhold his graces from the soul that loves and serves him slothfully. Hence saith the prophet: *Cursed is he who doeth the work of God deceitfully.* Jer. xlvi. 10. He therefore who serves God deceitfully must commit a great evil, since God curseth him. The grievous sinner, conscious of his crimes, confesses them; but the tepid Christian esteeming himself to be better than others because he is not guilty of great sins, lives on in the mire of his defects, and does not humble himself. O my God, I have by my tepidity closed up the avenue of those graces which thou wast willing to bestow upon me. Help me, O Lord, for I am resolved to amend my life. There is no reason why I should be sparing

with thee, who hast given thy life for me. Holy Mary, Mother of God, help me; in your patronage I confide.

Meditation Eighty-sixth.

On giving ourselves to God without reserve.

I. GOD has declared that he loves all those who love him: *I love them that love me.* *Prov. viii. 17.* But it is not to be supposed that God will give himself entirely to one who loves any thing in the world equally with God. At one time St. Teresa was in this state, keeping up an affection, not indeed an impure affection, but an inordinate one, for a certain relative. When however she divested herself of this attachment, God was pleased to say to her in a vision: "*Now that thou art wholly mine,* *"I am wholly thine.*" O my God, when shall the day arrive when I shall be wholly thine? Consume within me, I beseech thee, by the flames of thy divine love, all those earthly affections which hinder me from belonging entirely to thee. When shall I be able to say to thee with truth: my God, thee only do I desire, and besides thee there is nothing that I wish for.

II. *One is my dove, my perfect one is but one.* *Cant. vi. 8.* God so loves the soul that gives herself entirely to him, that he seems to love no other; and hence he calls her his only dove. St. Teresa after her death revealed to one of her sisters that God has greater love for one soul that aspires to perfection than for a thousand others that are in a state of grace, but are tepid and imperfect. O my God, for how many years hast thou invited me to become entirely thine, and I have refused! Death

is already approaching, and shall I die as imperfect as I have hitherto lived? No, I hope that death will not find me as ungrateful as I have hitherto been. Help me; for I desire to leave all things to become entirely thine.

III. Jesus Christ, through the love which he has for us, has given his whole self to us. *He hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us. Eph. v. 2.* "If then," says St. Chrysostom, "God has given him self entirely to you without reserve, if he has given you all, and nothing more remains for him to give you, as indeed he has done in his passion and in the holy Eucharist, reason requires that you also should give yourself without reserve to him." St. Frances of Sales says: "The heart is too little to love our bountiful Redeemer, who has loved us even to the laying down of his life for us." O what ingratitude, what injustice, to divide our hearts, and not to give them wholly to God! Let us then say with the spouse in the Canticles: "*My beloved to me, and I to my beloved.*" Thou, my God, hast given all to me, I will give all to thee. I love thee, my sovereign good. "*My God and my all.*" Thou desirest that I should be all thine, and such do I desire to be. O Mary, my Mother, pray for me that I may not love anything but God.

Meditation Eighty-seventh.

On the trouble and confusion of the Hour of Death.

I. *BE ye always ready: for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come. St. Luke, xii. 40.* "*Be ye always ready.*" Our blessed Saviour does not tell us to begin to prepare ourselves when death has arrived. but to prepare ourselves before-hand;

because the time of death will be a time of confusion, when it will be morally impossible to prepare ourselves in a proper manner to appear for judgment, and to obtain a favourable sentence. "It is "a just punishment," says St. Augustin, "upon him, " who having it in his power to do good, will not do "it, not to be able to do it afterwards, when he de- "sires to do it." No, my God, I will not wait until that time to begin a change of life. Make known to me what I must now do to please thee, for I desire to do without reserve whatever thou requirest of me.

II. The time of death is the time of night when nothing can be done. *The night cometh on, when no man can work.* St. John ix. 4. The fatal news of the disease being mortal, the griefs and pains which accompany it, the disordered state of the head, and above all, remorse of conscience will cast the poor sick man into such a state of distress and confusion as to hinder him from knowing what he is doing. He will anxiously desire to escape damnation, but will not find the means, for the time of chastisement will be at hand. *I will repay them in due time, that their foot may slide.* Deut. xxxii. 35. O my God, I give thee thanks for allowing me time to amend, now that it is the time of mercy and not of punishment. I would rather lose all things than forfeit thy grace. My sovereign good, I love thee above all things.

III. Imagine yourself in a vessel overtaken by a storm in the midst of the sea, already struck upon a rock and on the point of sinking; think how great would be your confusion, and that you would not know what to do to escape death. And hence imagine how great will be the confusion of the sinner who at his death shall find himself in a bad state of conscience. His will, his relatives, the last sacraments, restitutions to be

made, the calls of God which he despised, oh what a tempest will all these things create in the soul of the poor dying sinner! Go then, go now and put your troubled conscience in order. O my God, let not thy blood be shed for me in vain. Thou hast promised pardon to him that repents, wherefore do I grieve from the bottom of my heart for the many offences I have committed against thee. I love thee, O Lord, above all things and will never more offend thee. How is it possible I should ever again after so many mercies offend thee? No, my God, I will rather die. Holy Mary, pray for me to your divine Son that I may never more offend him.

Meditation Eighty-eighth.

On provoking God by sin to depart from us.

I. EVERY soul that loves God, is loved by Him in return; and God dwells within it and leaves it not until he is expelled by sin: "He forsakes not, "unless he be forsaken," says the Council of Trent. When the soul deliberately consents to mortal sin, she expels God from her, and as it were says to him: leave me, O Lord, for I desire to possess thee no longer: *The wicked have said to God: depart from us. Job xxi. 14.* O my God, I have then had the audacity, when I committed sin, to expel thee from my soul and to desire to have thee no longer with me! But thou wouldest not have me despair, but repent and love thee. Yes, my Jesus, I do repent for having offended thee, and love thee above all things.

II. The sinner must be sensible that God cannot dwell in a soul together with sin. When therefore

sin enters the soul God must depart from it. So that the sinner, by admitting sin, says to God : as thou canst not remain any longer with me, unless I renounce sin, depart from me ; it is better to lose thee than the pleasure of committing sin. At the same time that the soul expels God, it gives possession to the devil. Thus does the sinner eject his God who loves him, and make himself the slave of a tyrant who hates him. This, O Lord, is what I have hitherto done : Oh give me some share of that abhorrence for my sins which thou didst experience in the garden of Gethsemani. Dearest Redeemer, would that I had never offended thee !

III. When an infant is baptized, the priest commands the devil to depart from its soul : " Go forth, " unclean spirit, and give place to the Holy Ghost." On the contrary, when man falls from a state of grace into mortal sin, he says to God : " Go forth " from me, O Lord, and give place to the devil." Such is the foul ingratitude, O Lord, with which I have frequently repaid thy great love towards me. Thou didst come down from heaven to seek me the lost sheep ; and I have fled from thee and expelled thee from my soul. But no, I will now embrace thy sacred feet and will never more leave thee, my beloved Lord. Help me with thy holy grace. And O blessed Mary, most holy Queen, do not abandon me.

Meditation Eighty-ninth.

On the abuse of Grace.

I. THE graces which God bestows on us, his lights, his calls, and the good thoughts with which he inspires us, have all been purchased for us by

the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. To the end that man might be able to receive them, it was necessary that the Son of God should die, and by his merits render him capable of such divine favours. He therefore who despises the divine graces, by abusing them, despises the blood and death of Jesus Christ. Such abuse has caused the eternal destruction of numberless Christians, who are now bewailing their sins in hell without hope or remedy. O my God, how often have I deserved to become one of their number! I thank thee that thou now allowest me time to bewail my past crimes, and hope that thou wilt pardon me.

II. O God, what an eternal torment must it be to the souls in hell to call to mind the many graces they received from thee in this world, now that they know the value of them and the evil which they have done by despising them! My beloved Redeemer, give me light and grace to know my obligation to love thee, for having, instead of chastising me for my ingratitude, and abandoning me in my sins, increased thy lights and redoubled thy calls upon me. Behold since thou now callest me, I will become entirely thine and for ever.

III. Reflect, Christian, that if God had bestowed the same graces upon an infidel which he has upon you, that infidel would now most probably be a saint. And what have you done? God has multiplied his graces, and you have multiplied your offences against him. If you continue in your sins, how will it be possible for God to bear longer with you and not to abandon you? Put an end, without delay, to your ingratitude, and tremble, lest, if you should not now avail yourself of the graces which he bestows upon you, no more lights nor graces should be conferred upon you. Yes, my God, thou hast already borne with me too long; I will never more despise thee. And why should I delay?



that thou mayest really abandon me? “*Cast me not away from thy face.*” Reject me not, O Lord; from henceforth I will love thee with my whole soul. Thou indeed art most worthy of all love; and I will endeavour to please and love thee in all things. Strengthen me and make me faithful. Mary, Mother of God, help me with your prayers.

Meditation Ninetieth.

On divine love victorious over God himself.

I. OUR God is omnipotent: who then shall ever overcome and conquer him? But no, says St. Bernard, love towards man has conquered and triumphed over him: for, this his love has caused him to die in torments upon a disgraceful cross to secure man’s salvation. O infinite love, unhappy the soul that loves thee not!

II. What man passing by Calvary on that day when Jesus was dying upon the cross, if, on his enquiring who that criminal was, crucified in such a mangled state, he had been told that it was the Son of God, true God equal with his Father, had he not been a believer, would not have said with the Gentiles, that to believe such things was folly: “It appeared folly,” says St. Gregory, “that the “author of life should die for men.” If it would have appeared folly to suppose that a king would become a worm for the love of a worm; greater still would have appeared the folly of believing that God had become man for the love of man, to die for man. This led St. Mary Magdalen, of Pazzi, to say, considering this immense love of God: “My “Jesus, thou lovest us to infatuation.” And, alas!

I, a miserable sinner, have not loved God ! but have many times offended him !

III. Christian, lift up thine eyes, and behold that afflicted one upon the cross, oppressed with grief and torments, struggling in his agony, on the point of expiring, dying for the pure love of thee. Knowest thou who he is ? He is thy God. And if thou believest that he is thy God, ask who has reduced him to such a miserable condition ? "What has done this ?" says St. Bernard ; "Love has done it, "regardless of its own dignity." It was love, which refuses no pain, nor disgrace, when it would make itself known and exert itself for its beloved. O Jesus, it was because thou didst so much love me, that thou didst suffer so much for me : if thou hadst loved me less, thou wouldest have suffered less. I love thee, my dear Redeemer, with my whole heart. And how can I refuse God my whole love, when He has not refused me his precious blood, his life ? I love thee, O Jesus, my love, my all. Holy Mary, Virgin of virgins, help me by your prayers faithfully to love Jesus.

Meditation Ninety-first.

On the sentence of the wicked at the last Judgment.

I. CONSIDER how great the rage of the wicked will be, to behold, at the last day, the just, shining with glory, waiting with joyful eagerness for that "*Come, ye blessed,*" with which Jesus Christ will invite them into heaven ; and how great the shame and confusion of the wicked will be to behold themselves surrounded by devils, and trembling with expectation of that "*Depart from me, ye cursed,*" with which Jesus Christ will pronounce their con-

demnation before the whole world. O my dear Redeemer, suffer not thy death, which thou didst undergo with so much love, to become of no avail to me.

II. "*Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.*" Such will be the sentence of condemnation, such the unhappy doom, which will fall upon the wicked: to burn for ever in the flames of hell, accursed of God and separated from him. Do Christians believe that there is a hell? How comes it then, that so many voluntarily expose themselves to its terrible torments? O my God, who knows, but that I also may be of their number at the last day? I hope through thy precious blood that so dreadful an evil will not befall me; but who shall make me certain of this? Enlighten me, O Lord, and make known to me what I must do to escape thy wrath, which I have hitherto so often provoked; take thou pity on me and forgive me.

III. At last, in the midst of the valley of Josaphat, the earth will open and swallow down the wicked together with the devil and all his evil spirits; who will all hear those gates shut over them which will never again be opened for all eternity. O accursed sin, to what a miserable end wilt thou one day conduct innumerable souls! Unhappy they, for whom is reserved such a lamentable doom for all eternity! O my God, what will my lot be? The fire of hell does not terrify me so much as the thought of being for ever separated and at a distance from thee, my only good. My dear Redeemer, if hitherto I have despised thee, I now love thee above all things and with my whole heart. I know that the punishment of remaining for ever separated from thee will not befall those who love thee; grant therefore that I may love thee for ever; bind me and unite me closely to thee; unite me daily more and more to thee, that I may never be

separated from thee, and then do with me whatever else thou pleasest. Holy Mary, advocate of sinners, never cease to protect me.

Meditation Ninety-second.

On the sentence of the Elect.

I. “*COME, ye blessed of my Father.*” Such will be the glorious sentence which in the day of triumph will be pronounced in favour of those who shall have loved God. St. Francis of Assissium, having had it revealed to him that he was one of the predestinate, almost died of the consolation which such a revelation afforded him; what then will be the joy of the elect when they shall hear Jesus Christ inviting them: Come, ye blessed children, come and possess the inheritance of your divine Father, come and reign with him for ever in heaven! How often, O God, have I through my own fault forfeited thy blessed kingdom: but, O Jesus, thy precious merits encourage me to hope that I shall regain it. My dear Redeemer, I trust in thee and love thee.

II. O how will the blessed congratulate one another, when they shall behold themselves placed upon thrones and united in the enjoyment of God for all eternity, without the least fear of ever being again separated from him! What joy and glory will be theirs to enter on that day crowned into heaven, singing together songs of gladness and the sweet praises of God. Happy souls, that are destined to such a blessed lot! O God of my soul, bind me to thee with the sweet bonds of thy holy love, that in that day I may enter into thy kingdom

and praise and love thee for ever. “*The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever.*”

III. Let us arouse our slumbering faith. It is certain that we shall one day be judged, and that we shall receive sentence either of eternal life or of eternal death. If we be not now secure of obtaining the sentence of life, let us endeavour to make it certain. Let us fly from all those occasions which might expose us to the loss of our souls; and unite ourselves to Jesus Christ by frequently approaching the sacraments, by pious meditations, by spiritual reading and continual prayer. The adoption or neglect of these means will be the sign of our salvation or of our perdition. My beloved Jesus, and my Judge, I hope through thy precious blood that thou wilt on that day bless me; and hence do thou bless me now and pardon me all the offences I have committed against thee. Grant me to hear the same consoling words which thou didst address to Magdalen: “*Thy sins are forgiven thee.*” I am sorry with my whole heart for having offended thee: pardon me, and at the same time give me grace always to love thee. I love thee, my sovereign good; I love thee more than myself, my treasure, my love, my all. Thou art the God of my heart, and my portion for ever. O my God, thee only do I desire. Holy Mary, by your powerful intercession you can procure my salvation, and you desire it; in you do I confide.

Meditation Ninety-third.

On dishonouring God by sin.

I. *BY transgression of the law thou dishonourest God.* Rom. ii. 23. Take notice, sinner, what the

A apostle says, and consider what thou dost when thou breakest the divine law ; thou dishonourest God. Yes, the sinner dishonours God, when he loses all respect for him before his face, and declares by his actions that it is not a great evil to disobey God and to make no account of his law. Behold, O God, prostrate at thy feet an ungrateful sinner, who after having been so loved and favoured by thee has many times dishonoured thee by breaking thy precepts. I have deserved a thousand hells, but remember that thou didst die in order to save me from hell.

II. The sinner dishonours God, by preferring a miserable gratification, a wretched worldly gain or a mere caprice before the grace of God : for by giving his consent to sin, he declares that such things are more precious to him than the friendship of God. Thus is God dishonoured and affronted by the sinner, who by his actions pronounces him to be viler than some wretched gratification ; for which he turns his back upon him. O my God, thou art an infinite good ; and how could I, a miserable worm, prefer any corrupt inclinations and passions before thee ? If I did not know that thou hast promised pardon to those who repent, I should not dare to crave thy mercy. I am sorry, O infinite goodness, for having offended thee.

III. God is our last end, for he has created us to serve and love him in this world, that we may be happy with him for ever in the next. But when man prefers a vile pleasure to divine grace, he makes his pleasure his last end, he makes it his God. What a dishonour must it be to God, who is infinite good, to see himself exchanged for something so vile and wretched ! My beloved Redeemer, I have offended thee ; but thou wouldest not have me despair of thy mercy : although thou knowest my ingratitude, yet dost thou love me and desire

my salvation. I am sensible of the evil I have done by offending thee, and I am sorry for it with my whole heart. I am resolved rather to die than again incur thy displeasure. I fear my own weakness, but I hope in thy goodness, that thou wilt enable me to be faithful to thee till death. O Jesus, thou art my hope and my love. Holy Mary, intercede for me that I may obtain salvation.

Meditation Ninety-fourth.

On the joy of Jesus Christ at finding the lost sheep.

I. OUR Blessed Saviour says of himself in *St. Luke*, (*chap. xv.*) that he is the affectionate shepherd, who having lost one of his hundred sheep, leaves the ninety-nine in the desert, and goes in search of the one that is lost; and finding it receives it with joy, takes it on his shoulders, and returning home calls together his neighbours to rejoice with him, saying; "*rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost.*" O divine shepherd! I have been that lost sheep, but thou hast sought me until, as I hope, thou hast found me. Thou hast found me and I have found thee. How shall I ever again stray away from thee, my beloved Lord? And yet such a misfortune may happen to me. O permit it not, never suffer me, O Jesus, to leave thee and to lose thee again.

II. But why, O Jesus, dost thou call together thy friends to rejoice with thee for having found the lost sheep? Shouldst thou not rather bid them rejoice with the lost sheep, for its having again found thee, its God? But so great is thy love for my poor soul, that thou esteemest it thy happiness to have found it! My dearest Redeemer, since thou

hast found me, bind me to thee with the blessed bonds of thy holy love, that I may always love thee and may never more depart from thee.

III. God, says the prophet, no sooner hears the voice of the penitent sinner crying to him for mercy, than he immediately answers and forgives him: *At the voice of thy cry, as soon as he shall hear, he will answer thee. Isa. xxx. 19.* Behold me then at thy sacred feet, O God, grieved from the bottom of my heart for having so often offended thee, and craving thy compassion and pardon. I can no longer endure to behold myself at a distance from thee and deprived of thy love. Thou art infinite goodness, and most worthy of infinite love. If hitherto I have despised thy grace, I now value it above all the kingdoms of the earth. And because I have offended thee, I beseech thee to avenge thyself upon me, not indeed by casting me away from thy face, but by giving me such a sorrow for my sins as may cause me to lament my guilt before thee, all the days of my life. Lord, I love thee with my whole heart, and as I cannot trust that I shall continue faithful to thy love, be thou my help and my succour. And do thou, O holy Virgin help me with your holy intercession.

Meditation Ninety-fifth.

On Jesus suffering the punishment due to our sins.

I. *SURELY he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows. Isa. liii. 4.* Who could believe this, if divine faith did not assure us of it: “ *Surely “ he hath borne our infirmities!*” Man sins, and the Son of God makes satisfaction for him. O Jesus, I have sinned, and hast thou made satisfaction for

me? Yes, I have deserved hell, and thou, in order to deliver me from eternal death hast been pleased to be condemned to death upon the cross! In a word, in order to pardon me, thou wouldest not pardon thyself, and shall I ever be so base as to offend thee again during the remainder of my life? No, my Saviour, I owe thee too much, I am too much obliged to love thee. Behold I am thine, do with me what thou pleasest, I will endeavour to please thee in all things.

II. He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins. Isa. liii. 5. Behold my soul, behold thy God scourged at a pillar in Pilate's hall, crowned with thorns, wounded from head to foot, and his whole body mangled and streaming with blood; hear how he lovingly says to thee: My son, see what thou hast cost me. Ah my sweet Saviour, thou hast suffered so much for me, and how could I have repaid all thy love with so many offences! Thou, to save me from being lost, has suffered so many torments, and I have lost thee for a mere nothing! O accursed sinful pleasures, I hate and detest you; you have been the cause of all the sufferings of my Saviour for me.

III. St. Margaret of Cortona, when she meditated on the sufferings of Christ, could not restrain herself from excessively bewailing her sins. One day her confessor said to her: " Margaret cease to weep: for God has pardoned thee." But hear what the penitent sinner answered: " Ah father, how can I think of no longer bewailing my sins, while I remember that they afflicted my dear Redeemer, during the whole of his life?" My beloved Jesus, I also must have afflicted thee during thy life, by my sins. St. Margaret knew how to bewail her sins, and to love thee, but when shall I begin really to bewail mine, when shall I begin really to love thee? I am sorry, my sovereign

good, for having afflicted thee. I love thee, my dear Redeemer, more than myself. O draw my whole heart to thee, and enflame it entirely with thy holy love; suffer me not to live any more ungrateful for the many graces which thou hast bestowed upon me. Holy Mary, you can powerfully assist me by your holy intercession to become holy; do this I beseech you, for the love of Jesus Christ.

Meditation Ninety-sixth.

On the happiness of possessing the grace of God, and the misery of being deprived of it.

I. MAN knows not the value of divine grace, and hence he exchanges it for a mere nothing. It is a treasure of infinite value. The gentiles said it was impossible for a creature to become the friend of God. But no; divine grace induces God to call the soul that possesses it his friend: *You are my friends*, said our Blessed Saviour, to his disciples. *St. John*, xv. 14. When therefore, O God, my soul was in the state of grace, it was thy friend; but by sin it became the slave of the devil and thine enemy. I give thee thanks for affording me time to recover thy grace. I am sorry, O Lord, with my whole heart for having lost it; in thy pity restore it to me, and suffer me not to lose it any more.

II. How fortunate should that man esteem himself who becomes the friend of his king. It would be presumption for a vassal to expect that his prince should make him his friend; but it is not presumption for the soul to aspire to be the friend of God. If I would become a friend of Cæsar, (said a certain courtier, as St. Augustin relates,) I should have great difficulty in becoming such, but

if I would become the friend of God, I am already his friend. An act of contrition and of love makes us the friends of God. St. Peter of Alcantara said: "No tongue can express the greatness of the love of "Jesus for a soul in the state of his grace." O my God, am I in thy grace or not? I certainly know that at one time I had lost it, and who knows whether I have regained it? O Lord, I love thee, and am sorry for having offended thee, make haste to pardon me.

III. Oh how great on the contrary, is the misery of a soul that is fallen from the state of grace! She is separated from the sovereign good. She belongs no more to God, and God belongs no more to her. She is no longer loved by God, but hated and abhorred by him. Before, he blessed her as his child, but now, he curses her as his enemy. Such is the unhappy state in which I was, O God, when I had forfeited thy grace. I hope I have arisen from my unhappy condition, but if I have not, hasten, O Jesus, to rescue me from it. Thou hast promised to love those who love thee. I love thee, my sovereign good, do thou love me; and may I hope never again to be deprived of thy love. Holy Mary, succour me your humble client: I commend myself to your patronage.

Meditation Ninety-seventh.

On conformity to the will of God.

I. THE first effect of love is the union of wills. The most high God, because he loves us, would have us love him, and hence he demands our hearts, that is, our wills: *My son, give me thy heart. Prov. xxxiii. 26.* Our whole life and salvation depend

upon our uniting our wills to the will of God, which is the only rule of what is just and perfect: *Life*, says the psalmist, *is in his will. Ps. xxix. 6.* He who is united to the will of God, lives and is saved: but he who separates himself from it, dies and is lost. *No, my God, I will never more separate myself from whatever thou desirest of me. Give me grace to love thee, and dispose of me as thou pleasest.*

II. This is the great object of all those who love God, to conform themselves at all times to his divine will. And this is what Jesus taught us to pray for, that we may be able to fulfil the will of God here upon earth with as much perfection as the blessed do in heaven: "*Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven.*" St. Teresa made an offering of her will to God, at least fifty times every day, in this, imitating David, who said: *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready. Ps. lvi. 8.* Ah how effectually does one perfect act of conformity to the will of God change the sinner into a saint, as it happened to St. Paul, who by only saying to God: "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" from a persecutor of the church was changed into an apostle and vessel of election. O my God, I will never more lament the tribulations which thou shalt send me. I know that all will be for my good. I will say always: "*Lord, may thy holy will be ever accomplished. As thou willest, so do I will. Thy will be done. As it hath pleased the Lord, so be it done.*"

III. The most certain sign of the soul's loving God, is its peaceful conformity to the will of God in all adverse occurrences, such as poverty, sickness, losses and ruin. In the afflictions which happen to us from the malice of men, we should consider not the stone which strikes us, but the hand of God who casts it. God does not will the ~~sin~~ of those who deprive us of our goods, reputa-

tion or life; but that we should accept such afflictions as coming from his hands, and should say as Job did when his goods were taken from him: *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done. blessed be the name of the Lord.* Job. i. 21. O my God, I have not done in this manner; how often, to follow my own will, have I despised thine! But then I did not love thee; now I do love thee more than myself; I embrace all thy divine appointments, and desire to do whatever thou pleasest. But thou knowest my weakness, enable me therefore by thy assistance to accomplish what I now resolve. O holy will of God, thou shalt be from henceforward my whole love. Holy Mary, obtain for me the grace ever to do the will of God, during the remainder of my life.

THE WAY OF SALVATION.

PART II.

Meditations

FOR PARTICULAR TIMES AND DAYS OF THE YEAR.

Eight Meditations on the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word; for the first eight days of Advent, beginning with the first Sunday of Advent.

Meditation First.

For the first day of Advent.

I. *AND the Word was made flesh. St. John, i. 14.* God created us to love him in this world, that we might afterwards enjoy him in the next; but we ungratefully rebelled against him by sin, and refused him our obedience; and on this account we were deprived of divine grace, and excluded from heaven, and moreover condemned to the eternal torments of hell. Thus were we all lost. But God, being moved with compassion for us, resolved to send into the world a Redeemer, who should deliver us from our lost and miserable condition.

II. But who should become this Redeemer? an angel, a seraph? no, God to manifest his excessive love for us, sent his only Son: *He sent his own Son,*

in the likeness of sinful flesh. Rom. viii. 3. God sent his only begotten Son, clothed in the same flesh as sinners, but not stained with the guilt of sin, to make satisfaction to divine justice for our sins by his sufferings and death, and thus to deliver us from eternal death, and render us worthy of divine grace and eternal glory. I give thee thanks, O God, for myself, and for all mankind. Behold if thou hadst not thought of saving us, I and all mankind should all have been lost for ever.

III. Dwell here on the infinite love which God has shown us in this great work of the Incarnation of the Word, by willing that his Son should come into the world and sacrifice his life by the hands of executioners, upon a cross, in a sea of sorrows and ignominies, to obtain for us pardon and life eternal. O infinite goodness! O infinite mercy! O infinite love! A God to become man, and die for us poor worms! Dearest Redeemer, make me know how much thou hast loved me, that at the sight of thy love I may know how to estimate my ingratitude. Thou hast delivered me by thy death from perdition, and have I ungratefully turned my back upon thee to return to perdition? I am exceedingly sorry for having been guilty of so grievous an injury against thee. Pardon me, O Jesus, and preserve me for the future from sin; never suffer me to lose thy grace any more. I love thee, my dear Jesus, thou art my hope and my love. Holy Mary, Mother of my Saviour, recommend my soul to him.

Meditation Second.

I. *HE was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and he was made man. (Nicene Creed.)*

God created Adam and enriched him with many gifts ; but ungrateful man grievously outraged his Creator by committing sin, and thus became with all his descendants most miserable, deprived of divine grace and of heavenly glory. The whole human race was lost and had no remedy. Man had offended God, but was incapable of making satisfaction for his sin ; it required a divine person to make an adequate satisfaction for man's guilt. How did the Eternal Father proceed for the redemption of lost man ? He sent his own Son to become man, clothed with the same flesh as sinners, that he might pay their debt to divine justice, and restore them to divine grace. If, O God, thy infinite goodness had not devised this expedient, which of us could have ever requested or conceived it ?

II. O God, what a subject of astonishment to the angels must have been thy great love to rebellious man ! What could they have said in beholding the Word eternal made man, having assumed the same flesh as sinful men ? so that he appeared in the world in the form of man like unto ourselves ! O Jesus, what great obligations are we under to thee ; and how much more than others am I indebted to thee, having offended thee more than others ! If thou hadst not been pleased to save me, what would have become of me for all eternity ? Who could have delivered me from the punishments I have deserved ? Be thou ever blessed and praised for such great charity.

III. The Son of God therefore came down from heaven to become man, he came to lead a painful life, he came to die upon a cross for the love of men, and shall men who believe this, love any other object besides this God made flesh ! O Jesus, my Saviour, I will love none but thee. Thou alone hast loved me, and I will love only thee. I renounce all created goods ; thou alone art sufficient

for me, O immense and infinite goodness. If hitherto I have displeased thee, I am now most sorry for it, and would willingly die of grief for the displeasure which I have occasioned thee. Oh! never suffer me for the future to become ungrateful for the love which thou hast shown me. No, my Jesus, grant that I may always love thee, and do with me what thou pleasest. O infinite goodness, O infinite love, let me never more live without loving thee. O Mary, Mother of mercy, this favour do I ask of you, to obtain for me the grace of always loving God.

Meditation Third.

I. CONSIDER, O Christian, that the Eternal Father could not have given us more powerful motives to confide in his mercy and to love his infinite bounty, than by giving us his well-beloved Son for our Redeemer; because he could not give us a more certain proof of his desiring our good, and of his immense love for us; because, having given us his Son, he can give us nothing more or greater. May all men, O God eternal, praise thy infinite charity for ever.

II. *How hath he not also, with him, given us all things?* Rom. viii. 33. God having given us his Son, equally loved by him as himself, how can we doubt whether he will grant us whatever other good things we may ask of him? If he has given us his Son, he will not refuse to forgive us the offences we have committed against him, when we are sorry for them and detest them: he will not refuse us the graces necessary to resist temptations, when we seek for them from him; he will not refuse us his holy love, when we desire it; nor will

he refuse us the joys of heaven, unless we render ourselves unworthy of them by falling into sin. Hear how Jesus himself assures us of this: *If you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it to you.* St. John xvi. 23. Animated, therefore, O God, by this promise, for the love of thy Son Jesus, I beseech thee to pardon me all my offences against thee. Grant me perseverance in virtue till the end of my life. Give me thy holy love, that I may detach my heart from all things else, to love only thee, who art infinite goodness. Grant me the joys of heaven, that I may then love thee with all my strength and for ever, without any fear of ever ceasing to love thee.

III. In a word, the Apostle tells us, that having obtained Jesus Christ, we are become rich in all good things, so that no grace is wanting to us: *In all things you are made rich, so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace.* 1 Cor. i. 5, 7. Yes, O Jesus, thou art every good, thou alone art sufficient for me, thou alone art my only desire. If at any time I have driven thee away from me by sin, I am now sorry for it with my whole heart. Pardon me, and return to me, O Lord. And if now thou be with me, as I hope thou art, never more depart from me; or I will rather say, may I never have the misfortune to expel thee from my soul. O Jesus, Jesus, my treasure, my love, my all, I love thee, and will always love thee. O Mary, help me to love Jesus Christ.

Meditation Fourth.

I. *WHEN the fulness of the time was come, God sent his Son.* Gal. iv. 4. How ought we to thank God for having allowed us to be born after the ac-

complishment of the great work of human redemption! This is signified by the words "*fulness of time*;" a time happy through the fulness of the grace which Jesus Christ has obtained for us by his coming! How wretched should we be, if, loaded with so many crimes, we were now upon the earth before the coming of Jesus Christ!

II. Before the coming of the Messias, in what a miserable state were men! In Judea alone was the knowledge of the true God; in all the other parts of the world idolatry reigned; so that men adored stones, and idols, and devils. They adored multitudes of false gods; but the true God they did not love nor even know. Even now how many kingdoms are there, where there are only a few of the true faith, and all the rest heretics or infidels? How much therefore are we indebted to God for having allowed us to be born, not only after the coming of Jesus Christ, but in the bosom of the true Church! I give thee thanks, O God, for so great a favour. I know, O God, that thou desirest my salvation, and I have wickedly many times exposed myself to perdition by renouncing thy grace. Have pity, my Redeemer, on my poor soul, which has cost thee so much.

III. *He sent his Son that he might redeem them who were under the law.* Gal. iv. 4, 5. The slave committed sin, and by so doing gave himself up to the power of the devil, and his Lord himself came and rescued him by his own death! O immense love, O infinite love of God for man! If, my Redeemer, thou hadst not saved me by thy death, what would become of me? Of me, who by my sins have so often deserved hell? If then, O Jesus, thou hadst not died for me, I should have lost thee for ever, nor would there be now the least hope for me of regaining thy grace, nor of ever beholding thy face in heaven. My dear Saviour, I

thank thee for thy great mercy, and hope to thank thee for it for ever in heaven. I am sorry above every evil for having hitherto despised thee. For the future I will suffer every pain, even death itself, rather than offend thee any more. But as I have already betrayed thee, so also I may again betray thee. O never let me be separated from thee! I love thee, O infinite goodness, and I desire always to love thee, both in this life and in the next. Holy Mary, my advocate and Queen, keep me always under your protection, and preserve me from sin.

Meditation Fifth.

I. *HE loved me and delivered himself for me. Gal. ii. 20.* If then, O Jesus, for the love of me thou hast embraced a painful life and most bitter death, I may indeed say that my death was thy death, and that my sorrows were thy sorrows, that thy merits are my merits, that thou thyself art mine, since thou hast abandoned thyself to so many sufferings for me. O Jesus, nothing afflicts me so much, as the thought that thou wast once mine, and that I have so many times wilfully lost thee. Forgive me and attach me to thyself, and never suffer me to lose thee again. I love thee with my whole soul. Thou desirest to be all mine, and I desire to be all thine.

II. The Son of God, being true God, is infinitely happy: and yet, says St. Thomas, he has done and suffered as much for man as though he could not be happy without man. If Jesus Christ had been obliged to purchase his happiness on this earth, what more could he have done, than load himself with all our weaknesses, take upon himself all our infirmities, and die a most cruel and ignominious

death? But no, he was innocent, he was holy, he was in himself happy: whatever therefore he has done and suffered, he has done and suffered for our sake, to procure for us divine grace and heaven which we had lost. How miserable is that soul that does not love thee, O Jesus, and is not enflamed with love for thy great goodness.

III. If Jesus Christ had ever promised to give us the greatest proofs of his love for us, who would have dared to expect that he would make himself an infant like to us, that he would embrace our miseries, and even become the poorest of men, the most abject, and the most afflicted, even to death upon a disgraceful cross, reviled and abandoned by all, even by his heavenly Father? But what we should not have dared to think of he has thought of and accomplished. My beloved Redeemer, grant me, I beseech thee, the grace which thou hast purchased for me by thy death. I love thee, and am sorry for having offended thee. Take thou possession of my soul; may the devil never more have dominion over it; but may it be all and for ever thine, for thou hast purchased it with thy precious blood. Thou only hast loved me, and I will love thee alone. Save me from the punishment of living deprived of thy love, and chastise me as thou pleasest. O Mary, refuge of sinners, help me by your holy intercession, through the merits of Jesus, to save my soul.

Meditation Sixth.

I. *My sorrow is continually before me. Ps. xxxvii.*
 18. All the afflictions and ignominies which Jesus Christ suffered during his life and at his death, were ever present to his mind from the moment of

his birth : “ *My sorrow is always before me* ;” and he offered them all in every moment of his life in satisfaction for our sins. Our Blessed Lord revealed to one of his faithful servants, that every sin committed by mankind caused him so much grief, that it would have been sufficient to deprive him of life, if he had not preserved himself to suffer still more. O God, what base ingratitude hast thou received from men, but particularly from me ! Thou didst spend thirty-three years in accomplishing my redemption, and I have so many times sought, as far as in me laid, to afflict thee with sorrow even unto death, as often as I have sinned !

II. St. Bernardin of Sienna, writes, that Jesus Christ “ had every individual sin before his eyes.” Every one of our sins was continually present to our Blessed Saviour, from the time of his infancy, and immensely afflicted him. St. Thomas adds, (p. 3, q. 46, a. 6, ad. 4.) “ that his sorrow, in knowing “ the injury which was done by every mortal sin to “ his Father, and the evil done to us, exceeded the “ sorrow of all penitent sinners, even of those who “ have died from pure contrition ; because no one “ has ever loved God and his own soul so much as “ Jesus Christ loved his Father and our souls.” Since then, O Jesus, no one has ever loved me as thou hast loved me, it is just that I should love thee more than I love others. As I may say that thou only hast loved me, I will love thee alone.

III. The agony which Jesus suffered in the garden, at the sight of our sins with which he was loaded, he suffered from the time that he was conceived in his mother’s womb. If then Jesus Christ led a sorrowful life only on account of our sins, we ought, as long as our lives continue, to be afflicted at no other evils but the crimes which we have committed. My dear Redeemer, I would willingly die with grief for the many sins I have been guilty

of against thee in the course of my life. O Jesus, if thou lovest me, give me such a sorrow, as may take away my life, that thus I may obtain thy pardon, and grace to love thee with all the powers of my soul. I give thee my whole heart, and if I know not how to give it entirely to thee, do thou take full possession of it, and inflame it with thy holy love. Holy Mary, advocate of sinners, to you do I commend myself and the care of my salvation.

Meditation Seventh.

I. *I HAVE a baptism, wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.* St. Luke, xii. 50. Jesus could have saved us without suffering for us; but no, he chose a life of suffering and contempt, devoid of all human comfort, and a death most bitter and disgraceful; to teach us his great love for us, and his desire that we should love him. He was continually sighing during his life for the moment of his death, which he desired to offer to God to obtain our eternal salvation. It was this desire which made him say: "*I have a baptism, wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.*" He desired to be baptized with his own blood, to wash away not his own, but our sins. O infinite love, how miserable is he, who knows thee not, nor loves thee!

II. The same desire made him say on the night before his death: *With desire have I desired to eat this pasch with you.* St. Luke, xxii. 15. showing by such words that his only desire during his whole life had been for the time of his sufferings and death, to teach us the excess of love which he cherished towards us. So much then, O Jesus

didst thou desire our love, that to gain it thou didst not refuse even to die! How then can I refuse any thing to a God, who has shed his blood and laid down his life for the love of me?

III. "It is indeed a wonder," says St. Bonaventure, "to behold God suffer for the love of men; but "it is a much greater wonder to behold men look on "God suffering so much for their sakes, an infant "trembling with cold in a stable, a poor workman "living in a carpenter's shop, and dying like a cri- "minal upon a cross, and yet burn not with love for "so loving a God, but despise his love and renounce "it for the miserable gratifications of the earth." But how is it possible for God so to love men; yet for men, who are so grateful to one another, to be so ungrateful to God? O Jesus, I am so miserable as to be one of such ungrateful beings! Tell me, how thou couldst suffer so much for me, when thou didst know that I should be guilty of so many offences against thee? But since thou hast suffered for me and desirtest my salvation, grant me now a great sorrow for my sins, a sorrow equal to my ingratitude. I hate and sovereignly detest, O Lord, all my offences against thee. If hitherto I have despised thy grace, I now value it above all the kingdoms of the earth. I love thee with my whole soul, O God who art worthy of infinite love, and I desire to live only to love thee. Encrease the ardour of my love for thee. Remind me continually of the love which thou hast shown me, that my heart may ever burn with love for thee, as thy heart burns with love for me. O glowing heart of Mary, inflame my poor heart with the fire of holy love.

Meditation Eighth.

I. *YOU shall draw waters of joy of the Saviour's fountains.* Isa. xii. 3. We have three fountains of grace in Jesus Christ. The first is the fountain of *mercy*, in which we may cleanse ourselves from the filth of all our sins. For this end our most loving Redeemer formed for our benefit this blessed fountain with his own blood: *He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.* Apoc. i. 5. My dear Saviour, how much do I owe thee! Thou hast done for me what no servant would ever do for his master, and no son for his father. No, I cannot cease to love thee, for by thy love for me, thou obligest me to love thee.

II. The second fountain is the fountain of *love*. Whoever meditates on the sufferings which Jesus Christ endured from his birth till his death for the love of us, cannot but be inflamed with that divine fire which Jesus came to cast upon the earth, and which he so much desired should be enkindled in our hearts. So that the water from this fountain both cleanses and inflames our souls. Grant then, O Jesus, that the blood which thou hast shed for me, may not only wash away all my faults, but may also inflame me with the ardour of thy love. Grant that I may forget all other things, to attend only to love thee, my God, who art worthy of infinite love.

III. The third fountain is the fountain of *peace*. This is signified by those words of Christ: *If any man thirst, let him come to me.* St. John, vii. 37. He who desires peace of soul, let him come to me who am the God of peace. The peace which the Lord gives to those who love him, is not the peace which the world promises in pleasures and temporal good

things, which do not satisfy the heart of man: the peace which God gives to his servants, is true peace, peace full of contentment, and surpassing all the joys which creatures are able to afford: *He that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst for ever.* St. John, iv. 13. He who truly loves God, leaves all, despises all, and seeks nothing but God. Yes, my God, all I desire is thyself, and nothing more. There was a time when I sought other things besides thee; but knowing the injustice I have done thee, by preferring vile and perishable things before thee, I would willingly die of grief for my crimes. I am sensible of the evil I have done, and am sorry for it with my whole heart. I am sensible also that thou dost deserve all my love, and hence do I turn to thee to say, and as I hope, to repeat for ever in this life and the next: *My God, my God, thee alone do I desire!* O Mary, you are the first lover of our God; Oh make me partake of your love.

NOVENA FOR CHRISTMAS.

NINE MEDITATIONS, ONE FOR EACH DAY OF THE NOVENA.

Chaplet to be recited before each Meditation.

I. MOST sweet Jesus, born in a stable, and laid upon straw in a manger, have mercy on us. R.—*Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us. Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father.*

II. Most sweet Jesus, presented and offered by Mary in the temple to be one day sacrificed for us, have mercy on us. R.—*Have mercy, &c.*

III. Most sweet Jesus, persecuted by Herod, and obliged to fly into Egypt, have mercy on us. R.—*Have mercy, &c.*

IV. Most sweet Jesus, remaining in Egypt for seven years, poor, unknown and despised by that barbarous nation, have mercy on us. R.—*Have mercy, &c.*

V. Most sweet Jesus, returned into thy own country to be one day crucified between two thieves, have mercy on us. R.—*Have mercy, &c.*

VI. Most sweet Jesus, remaining in the temple at the age of twelve years to dispute with the doctors, and after three days found by Mary, have mercy on us. R.—*Have mercy, &c.*

VII. Most sweet Jesus, living a hidden life at Nazareth for thirty years, serving thy blessed Mother and St. Joseph, have mercy on us. R.—*Have mercy, &c.*

VIII. Most sweet Jesus, for three years before thy passion, preaching and teaching the way of salvation, have mercy on us. R.—*Have mercy, &c.*

IX. Most sweet Jesus, terminating thy sorrowful life by dying for us on the cross, have mercy on us. R.—*Have mercy, &c.*

Meditation First.

On the love of God in becoming man for us.

LET us consider the immense love which God has shown us in becoming man to obtain for us eternal salvation. Our first father, Adam, had sinned, and had rebelled against God, for which

he was expelled from Paradise, and, together with all his descendants, condemned to eternal death. But the Son of God, looking upon lost man, offered himself to take human flesh and free us from death, by dying for us as a malefactor on the cross. But, my beloved Son, might the Eternal Father have said to him, thou wilt have to lead a most humble and painful life upon the earth. Thou wilt have to be born in a cold stable and laid in a manger. Thou wilt have to fly into Egypt, in thine infancy, to escape from the hands of king Herod. After thy return from Egypt thou wilt have to reside under the roof of an humble carpenter, poor and despised. And at last thou wilt have to lay down thy life in the midst of torments, nailed to a cross, scorned and abandoned by all. Father, replies the Son, I will willingly undertake all, that man may be saved.

What would be said if a prince should take compassion on a dead worm, and be willing to become himself a worm, and shed his own blood, and die to bring back life to the worm? More than this has the Eternal Word done for us: being God, he has voluntarily made himself a worm like to us, and has died to recover for us the life which we had lost by forfeiting divine grace. Seeing that with all the many gifts which he had bestowed upon us he could not gain our love, he became man and gave his whole self to us: "*The Word was made flesh, and delivered up himself for us.*" "Man, by despising God," says St. Fulgentius, "separated himself from God: but God, by loving man, came from heaven to recover man." And why did he come? he came in order that man might know how much God loved him, and through gratitude might love God in return. Even the animals about us are loved by us: and why are we so ungrateful to God who has descended from heaven in order to be

loved by us? One day when a priest was saying these words in the Mass : “*And the Word was made flesh;*” a man that was present did not perform any act of reverence, when the devil struck him, saying : “Ungrateful wretch ! if God had done as much “for me, as he hath done for thee, I should have “been always prostrate on the ground to thank “him.”

Affections and Prayers.

O DIVINE Son of God, thou didst become man that thou mightest be loved by men, but where is the love which men have for thee? Thou hast given us thy blood and thy life to secure for us the salvation of our souls, and why are we so ungrateful, as, instead of loving thee, to slight and despise thee? Behold, O Lord, I have been one who more than others have been thus ungrateful to thee. But thy passion is my hope. Oh! through that love which caused thee to assume human nature and to die upon a cross for me, pardon me all the offences I have committed against thee. I love thee, O Word made flesh, I love thee, O my God, I love thee, O infinite goodness, and am exceedingly sorry for all my sins, and would willingly die of sorrow for them. Give me, O Jesus, thy love, and never suffer me to be again ungrateful to thee. I desire always to love thee. Grant me holy perseverance. O Mary, Mother of God, and my Mother also, obtain for me from your Son the grace of ever loving him until the end of my life.

Meditation Second.

On the love of God in being born an Infant.

THE Son of God, in becoming man for the love of us, could have appeared on the earth at once as a perfect man, as Adam appeared when he was first created: but as infants usually attract more the love of those who behold them, he chose to appear on the earth as an infant, and as an infant the poorest and most abject ever born. St. Peter Chrysologus writes: "Our God would be born thus, that "thus he might be loved." The prophet Isaias had foretold that the Son of God would be born an infant, and thus give himself wholly to us through the love which he had for us: *A child is born to us, and a son is given to us. Isa. ix. 6.*

O my Jesus, my sovereign and true God, what could have brought thee down from heaven to be born in a stable, but thy love for man? What could have drawn thee from the bosom of thy Father to be laid in a manger? What could have induced thee to exchange thy throne above the stars for a little straw? What could have called thee from the midst of the angelic choirs to come and be placed between an ox and an ass? Thou inflamest the hearts of the seraphim: and dost thou now tremble with cold in an open stable? Thou givest motion to the heavens and to the sun: and must thou now be moved by others taking thee in their arms? Thou providest food for men and for all living creatures: and dost thou now stand in need of nourishment to preserve thy life? Thou art the joy of heaven: and dost thou now weep and cry? Tell me what has reduced thee to such great miseries. "What has done this?" asks St. Bernard; and he answers: "Love has done it."

Affections and Prayers.

My dear infant Saviour, tell me for what end thou art come upon the earth? Tell me, what art thou in quest of? Ah! thou art come to die for me and to deliver me from hell. Thou art come to seek me, the lost sheep, that I may never more stray from thee but may always love thee. O my Jesus, my treasure, my life, my love, and my all, if I love not thee, whom shall I love? Where shall I find a parent, a friend, a spouse more loving than thou art, or who more affectionately desires my welfare? I love thee, O my God, I love thee, O my only good. I am grieved for having been so many years in the world without loving thee, and for having, instead of loving thee, offended and despised thee. Pardon me, my beloved Redeemer, for I am sorry for having treated thee in this manner, and grieve for it from the bottom of my soul. Pardon me, and give me grace never more to separate myself from thee, but always to love thee during the remainder of my life. O thou the love of my soul, to thee do I give my whole self; accept of me and reject me not as I have deserved to be rejected. Holy Mary, you are my advocate; you by your holy prayers obtain from your Son whatever you ask; intercede with him therefore to pardon me, and to grant me perseverance in virtue until the moment of my death.

Meditation Third.

On the poverty of Jesus from the time of his birth.

GOD so ordained it, that his Son should be born into the world at the time when an order had been

issued by the emperor for all persons to go to be enrolled in the place of their birth. And it came to pass, that when Joseph and his spouse had arrived at Bethlehem to be enrolled in compliance with Cæsar's edict, Mary's time was accomplished, and as she had been refused admittance into any of the houses, even into the poorest inns, she was obliged to take up her abode for the night in a stable, and there she brought forth the King of heaven. If Jesus had been born in Nazareth, although he would still have been born in poverty, yet he would have had at least all those comforts and conveniences which even poverty affords on such occasions. But no: he would be born in a cold and comfortless stable; he would have a manger for a cradle, and a little rough straw for a bed, that he might suffer the more.

Let us enter into the stable of Bethlehem, but let us enter with faith. If we enter without faith, we shall behold nothing but a poor infant who will excite our compassion by the beauty of his appearance, by his shivering with cold and his weeping, as he lies upon hard straw. But if we enter with faith, we shall see that the infant before us is the Son of God, that he is come into the world for the love of us, and suffers so much to satisfy for our sins; and how will it be possible for us not to thank him and to love him?

Affections and Prayers.

O MY infant Saviour, how could I, knowing how much thou hast suffered for me, have been so ungrateful as to offend thee? But the tears thou didst shed, and the poverty thou didst choose for the love of me, induce me to hope for the pardon of all my offences against thee. I am sorry, O Jesus, for having so often turned my back upon thee,

and love thee above all things : *My God and my all.* For the future thou alone shalt be my treasure and my only good. I will say to thee with St. Ignatius: " Give me thy love, give me thy grace, and "I am sufficiently rich." I wish for nothing more, I desire nothing more, thou art my all, O Jesus, my life and my love.

Meditation Fourth.

On the humble life which Jesus began in his infancy.

ALL the signs which the angels gave to the shepherds by which they might discover the infant Jesus, were marks of humility. *And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.* St. Luke, ii. 12. Thus would the Son of God, the King of heaven be born, because he came to destroy the reign of pride, which had been the original cause of all the evils which had fallen upon lost man.

The prophets had previously foretold that our Redeemer would be the most abject of men, and acquainted with scorn and contempt. And how much did he suffer from those who despised and rejected him! he was treated as a drunkard, a magician and a blasphemer. What ignominies did he undergo in his passion! he was abandoned by his own disciples, one of them even sold him for thirty pieces of silver, and another denied that he knew him: he was conducted through the streets bound like a robber, scourged like a slave, treated as a fool, as a mock king, buffeted, spit upon in the face, and at last made to die, nailed to a cross between two thieves, as the vilest malefactor in the world. " Was then," exclaims St.

Bernard, "the most noble treated as the vilest of men?" "But, my Jesus," continues the same saint, "the more thou wast vile, the more dear hast thou become to me."

Affections and Prayers.

Ah my dear Saviour, thou didst embrace contempt for the love of me, and I have been unable to put up with an injurious word, but have immediately thought of revenging it! I, who have so often deserved to be trampled upon by devils in hell! I am ashamed to appear before thee, proud and haughty sinner as I am. Cast me not away from thy face, O Lord, as I have deserved. Thou hast said that thou wilt not despise a contrite and humble heart. I am sorry for all the offences I have ever committed against thee. Pardon me, O Jesus; I will never more offend thee. Thou hast suffered so many injuries for the love of me: I will suffer all the injuries that are offered to me for the love of thee. I love thee, O Jesus, despised and rejected. I love thee, my sovereign good, above all things. Help me to love thee always, and to suffer all affronts for the love of thee. Holy Mary, recommend me to your Son, pray to Jesus for me.

Meditation Fifth.

On the suffering life of Jesus commenced from his birth.

JESUS Christ could have redeemed man without suffering and dying for him; but no, to teach us how much he loved us he chose for himself a life of continual hardships and sufferings. Hence the prophet Isaias calls him, "*the man of sorrows.*"

His passion did not commence a little before his death, but from the first moment of his life.

Scarcely is he born, but he is laid in a manger, where all is uneasy and painful. The black walls and foul stench of the stable, and the rough straw which serves for his bed, add to his sufferings. Soon after his birth, he is obliged to fly into Egypt, where he spent several years of his infancy in poverty and contempt. His life in Nazareth was but very little better, and at last his career was most painful, and terminated in Jerusalem, by death upon a cross in the midst of torments.

So that the life of Jesus was one continual suffering, and a twofold suffering; because he had always present to his mind the torments which he had to endure immediately before and at his death. Sister Mary Magdalen Orsini, weeping one day over her crucified Jesus, said to him: "But, O "Lord, thou didst hang only three hours upon the "cross, and I have been suffering these many "years." But Jesus answered her: "Ah! thou "little knowest what thou sayest; from the moment "of my conception, I suffered continually all the "pains both of my life and of my death." Jesus Christ was not, however, so much afflicted by all his corporal sufferings, which he voluntarily endured for us, as by the sight of our ingratitude towards him in return for all his love for us. St. Margaret of Cortona was never satisfied with bewailing her offences against God, on which account her confessor one day said to her: "Margaret, "cease to weep, for God has pardoned you." But she replied: "Ah! father, how is it possible I can "cease weeping, when I know that my sins afflicted "Jesus Christ during the whole of his life?"

Affections and Prayers.

DID I then, my dear Jesus, afflict thee by my sins during the whole of thy life? Tell me, O Jesus, what I must do, to obtain thy pardon. I will do all that thou requirest of me. I truly repent of all the offences I have ever committed against thee. I repent, and love thee more than myself. I perceive within myself a great desire to love thee; thou hast given me this desire; give me then strength truly to love thee. It is just that I should love thee much, because I have so much offended thee. Oh remind me continually of the love which thou hast shown me, that my soul may ever burn with the love of thee, that I may always think of thee, desire thee, and always seek to please thee. O God of love, I, who once was a slave of hell, now give myself entirely to thee. Accept of me in pity, and unite me to thee by thy holy love. O Jesus, I desire from this day forward to live and die in the exercise of thy love. Holy Mary, my Mother and my hope, help me to love God; this is the favour I now ask of you and hope to obtain.

Meditation Sixth.

On the mercy of God in coming down from heaven to save us.

“ *THE goodness*,” says St. Paul, “ *and kindness of God our Saviour appeared.*” *Tit. iii. 4.* When, therefore, the Son of God made man appeared in the world, then also appeared the great goodness of God towards us. St. Bernard observes, “ that “ the power of God appeared in the creation of the “ universe, and his wisdom in the preservation of “ it, but that his mercy appeared much more evi-

"dent in his taking upon himself human nature to 'save lost man by his sufferings and death.' And what greater mercy could the Son of God have shown us, than by taking upon himself the punishments which we had deserved? Behold him born a helpless infant, bound in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger, unable to move or to feed himself; he stands in need of Mary's support to sustain life. Behold him afterwards in Pilate's hall, bound with cords to a pillar, from which he cannot release himself, and there scourged from head to foot. Behold him on his way to Calvary, fainting and falling as he goes along, through weakness and the heavy weight of the cross which he is carrying. Behold him, at last, nailed to the disgraceful cross, and ending his life in the midst of torments.

Jesus Christ by his own great love towards us was desirous of gaining the whole love of our hearts towards him, and hence he would not send an angel to redeem us, but would come himself to save us by his own passion and death. If an angel had been our Redeemer, man would have been obliged to divide his heart, and to love God as his Creator, and the angel as his Redeemer; but God, who would have man's whole heart, as he was his Creator, would also be his Redeemer.

Affections and Prayers.

My dear Redeemer, where should I now be, if thou hadst not borne with me in thy great patience, but hadst called me out of life in a state of sin? Since then thou hast waited for me until now, O Jesus, make haste to pardon me, lest death should surprise me in the guilt of my sins. I am sorry, O my sovereign good, for having so much despised thee; and would willingly die to expiate my of-

fences. Thou wilt not reject a soul that sincerely seeks thee; if hitherto I have forsaken thee, I now seek thee and love thee. Yes, my God, I love thee above all things, I love thee more than myself. Help me, O Lord, to love thee always during the remainder of my life: I ask for nothing more; but this I do ask and hope to obtain from thee. Holy Mary, pray for me; for if you pray for me, I shall be secure of grace.

Meditation Seventh.

On the flight of Jesus into Egypt.

THE Son of God came down from heaven to save lost man; but was scarcely born when man began to persecute him. Herod fearing that the child would deprive him of his kingdom, sought to take away his life. Joseph was however admonished by an angel in a dream to take Jesus with his mother and fly into Egypt. Joseph immediately informed Mary, and obeyed: he collected together the few tools of his trade that would be necessary for him to obtain a living in Egypt for himself and his poor family; while Mary packed up a small bundle of clothes for the divine infant. Approaching his crib, and weeping, she said to her sleeping child, "My dearest child and my God, thou art "come down from heaven to save man, and thou "art scarcely born before man seeks to take away "thy life!" Taking him in her arms, she ceased to weep, and the same night, together with Joseph, began their journey.

Let us consider how much these holy pilgrims must have suffered, in making so long a journey, and without any conveniences for travelling. The

child could not walk, and Joseph and Mary were obliged to carry him by turns in their arms. In the deserts of Egypt, the bare ground was their bed, without any screen from the open air. The poor infant wept with cold, and Mary and Joseph wept with compassion. And who would not have shed tears, in seeing the Son of God, thus poor and persecuted, and flying from his enemies who sought his life!

Assertions and Prayers.

O my dear infant Saviour, thou didst weep, and thou hadst reason to weep in seeing thyself so persecuted by man, whom thou didst so much love. O God, I am one of those who persecuted thee by my sins. But thou knowest that I now love thee more than myself, and that nothing afflicts me so much as the remembrance of my ever having despised thee, my sovereign good. Pardon me, O Jesus, and grant that I may always carry thee in my heart through the whole journey of my life, that I may enter with thee into eternity. I have many times expelled thee from my soul by offending thee, but now I love thee above all things, and am sorry above every evil for having offended thee. My beloved Lord, I will never more leave thee, but do thou give me strength to resist temptations, and never suffer me to separate myself from thee any more; and grant that I may rather die than lose even once again thy holy grace. Holy Mary, pray for me, that I may live and die in the love of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Meditation Eighth.

On the life of Jesus in Egypt and at Nazareth.

OUR Blessed Redeemer passed the first part of his childhood in Egypt, remaining there for seven years in poverty and obscurity. Joseph and Mary were there as strangers and were unknown, having neither relatives nor friends; so that they had a difficulty in obtaining for themselves their daily bread by the labour of their own hands. Their house, their furniture, their food, were all of the poorest kind. In this little cottage Mary nourished and brought up Jesus. Here she made him his first little garment. Here it was that the child Jesus began to take his first steps, trembling and frequently falling, as it happens to other children. Here he began to utter his first imperfect accents. O ye heavens! to what is God reduced for the love of us! a God trembling and falling as he tries to walk! a God speaking the first broken accents of an infant!

Not unlike this was the poor and abject life which Jesus, after his return from Egypt, lived in the cottage at Nazareth. Here, until the age of thirty years, he did nothing else but assist in the carpenter's shop, in obedience to Joseph and Mary. "*And he was subject to them.*" *St. Luke* ii. What a subject of overwhelming astonishment! A God in the capacity of a servant! a God omnipotent, who by a single act of his will created the world, and can destroy it whenever he pleases. Ah! how should the thoughts of these things melt us with divine love! How delightful was it to observe the devotion with which Jesus prayed, the patience with which he worked, the readiness with which he obeyed, the modesty with which he eat, the sweet-

ness and affability with which he spoke and conversed. Ah how did every word and every action of the holy Jesus gain for him the love of all, but especially of Mary and Joseph, who were always observing him!

Affections and Prayers.

O JESUS, my Saviour, when I reflect that thou, my God, didst spend so many years in a poor cottage unknown and despised for the love of me, how can I desire the distinctions, pleasures, honours and riches of the world! I renounce all these things, and desire to become thy companion on earth, poor, mortified, and contemned, that I may come to enjoy thy blessed company for ever in heaven. What kingdoms! what treasures! O Jesus, hast thou in store for me! Thou shalt be my only treasure, my only good. I am exceedingly sorry for ever having despised thy friendship to satisfy my wicked caprices; I am sorry for it with all my heart. For the future I will rather lose my life a thousand times than lose thy grace. My God, I will never more offend thee, but will always love thee. Help me to continue faithful to thee to the end of my life. Holy Mary, refuge of sinners, intercede for me.

Meditation Ninth.

On the birth of Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem.

A DECREE of the Roman Emperor having gone forth, that all persons should present themselves to be enrolled in their own city, Joseph with his spouse Mary, set out from Nazareth to go to be

enrolled in Bethlehem. O God, how much must the Blessed Virgin have suffered in this long journey, over a mountainous country and in the depth of winter, through frost, and cold, and rain! As soon as they had finished their toilsome journey, Mary's time was accomplished. Joseph, therefore, went through the town in quest of lodgings, where Mary might bring forth her divine child. But, because they were poor, they were rejected by all: they were even refused admittance into the inns where other poor persons were admitted. They, therefore, left the town the same night, and coming to a neglected stable, Mary entered it. There, in the darkness of night, in a cold, damp stable, suited only for beasts, was born amongst us the Eternal Son of God. There did he appear for our sakes a tender infant, weeping and shivering with cold. Having adored him as her God, the Blessed Virgin pressed him to her bosom, and having bound him in the poor swaddling-clothes she had with her, laid him upon some straw in a manger. See in what manner the Son of God chose to be born for the love of us.

Affections and Prayers.

My adorable infant Jesus, I should not dare to present myself at thy feet, if I did not know that thou invitest me to approach thee. I by my sins caused thee to weep in the stable of Bethlehem. But since thou comest into the world to forgive penitent sinners, forgive me I beeeech thee, for I am exceedingly sorry for having despised thee, my Saviour and my God, who hast been so good to me, and hast so much loved me. In this memorable night thou dispensest great graces to many souls; do thou also give consolation to my poor soul. The grace which I now ask of thee is the

grace to love thee from this day forward with my whole heart; inflame my whole self with the fire of thy holy love. I love thee, O my God, who art become an infant for my sake. O do not suffer me any more to cease from loving thee! Holy Mary, your prayers are all-powerful; I ask nothing of you but to pray to Jesus for me.

HYMN TO THE INFANT JESUS.

GREAT King! from heaven's high throne descending low,
In Bethlehem's stable born in cold and wo,
Thou shiverest in a manger, Babe divine,
Much hast thou borne for sins: how much for mine!

The world's Creator thou, our God adored,
Thou sufferest cold and want, O humbled Lord!
Dear chosen Child! when love transforms thee so,
For thee my heart the more with love shall glow.

In joy reposing on thy Father's breast,
How can a couch of straw afford thee rest?
Sweet Love, thus pained, inflame my frozen heart,
Jesus! to me thy purest love impart.

If thus to suffer was thy gracious will,
Yet, loving Saviour! let me ask thee still,
What could thy blissful soul to suffering move?
Thou weepest—not for grief—Ah no! for love.

Thou grieveſt, after all thy love, to see
Thyſelf ſo little loved, O God, by me;
Yet if the past ſo little love has shown,
I love thee now, O Jesus, thee alone.

Thou ſleepeſt, holy Infant! but thou art
For us ſtill wakeful in thy tender heart:
Tell me, O beauteous Lamb! ſay what may be
Thy thoughts?—I hear thee lisp: “To die for thee.”

Thou dwelleſt on thy death for me, with joy;
Who then, ſave thee, ſhall all my thoughts employ?
Mary, my hope! if less I love your Son,
O love him you for me, and all is done.

On the Feast of the Circumcision.

I. BEHOLD the Eternal Father having sent his Son to suffer and to die for us, willed that he should on this day be circumcised, and begin to shed for us his sacred blood, by which he was to redeem us on the day of his death upon the cross, in the midst of ignominy and torments. And why? that this innocent Son might suffer the punishments which we had deserved by our sins. “*O admirable condescension,*” cries out the Holy Church, “*of the divine mercy towards us! O estimable love of charity! by which to redeem thy servant, thou hast given thy son to death.*” O eternal God, and who could ever have bestowed upon us so divine a gift, but thou who art infinite bounty and infinite love? If O God, by giving me thy divine Son, thou hast given me all that is most dear to thee, surely I cannot hesitate to give myself entirely to thee. Yes, my God, I give thee my whole self; accept of me and never suffer me to depart from thee any more.

II. Behold on the other hand the divine Son, all humility and love towards us, willingly embraces the bitter death destined for him, to save us sinners from eternal death, and begins on this day to make satisfaction for us to divine justice with the price of his blood. “*He humbled himself,*” says the Apostle, “*becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.*” Thou then, my Jesus, dost accept of death for the love of me: and what shall I do? shall I continue to offend thee by my sins? No, my dear Redeemer, I will never more be ungrateful to thee. I am exceedingly sorry for having hitherto been guilty of so many sins against thee. I love thee, O infinite goodness, and for the future will never cease to love thee.

III. "*Greater love than this*," says our Blessed Saviour, "*no man hath, that he should lay down his life for his friend.*" But thou, my Jesus, says St. Paul, hast shown greater love than this towards us thine enemies. Behold me, O Lord, who have hitherto been one of them. How many times have I, a miserable sinner, rather than obey thee, renounced thy friendship and love! I am now sensible of the evil which I have done: pardon me, O Jesus, for I would willingly die of grief for my sins. I now love thee with my whole soul, and nothing do I desire but ever to please and to love thee. Holy Mary, Mother of God, be a Mother to me, and pray to Jesus for me.

On the Epiphany.

I. THE Son of God is born in a stable poor and humble; there the angels of heaven acknowledge him singing: "*Glory to God in the highest;*" but the inhabitants of the earth, for whose salvation Jesus is born, know him not and leave him neglected. Only a few poor shepherds come to acknowledge him and to confess him to be their Saviour. But our loving Redeemer would even now begin to communicate to us the graces of redemption; and with this view begins to make himself known to the Gentiles, who were ignorant of him, and did not look for his coming. By means of a star he gives notice of his birth to the wise men of the east, enlightening them at the same time with an internal light, that they might come to acknowledge and adore him as their Redeemer. This was the first and greatest grace bestowed upon us; our calling to the true faith. O Saviour of the world, what would have become of us if thou hadst not

enlightened us? we should have been like to our fathers of old, who adored animals and blocks of stone and wood; and thus should we have all perished. I give thee thanks on this day for myself and for all mankind.

II. Behold, the Wise men begin their journey without any delay, and by the direction of the star come to the place where the holy infant is lying: *And they found the child with Mary his mother. Luke ii.* They find there only a poor maid, and a poor infant, wrapped in poor swaddling-clothes. On entering into the place, they feel within them an interior joy, they feel their hearts attracted by this lovely infant. That poverty, those tears from the eyes of their infant Saviour, were so many darts and flames of love to their enlightened hearts. Yes, my infant Jesus, the more enlightened and poor I behold thee, so much the more dost thou inflame me with thy love.

III. The infant looks upon these holy pilgrims with a smiling countenance, and thus favourably accepts these first-fruits of his redemption. The holy Mother is silent, but by her cheerful looks welcomes and thanks them for this homage done to her Son. They also are silent and adore him, and acknowledge him for their Saviour and their God, offering him their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. O Jesus, my infant King, I also adore thee, and offer thee my miserable heart. Accept of it and change it. Make it all thine, so that it may love nothing but thee. My sweet Saviour, save me, and let my salvation be to love thee always and without reserve. Holy Mary, Virgin of virgins, intercede with Jesus to grant me this favour.

On the feast of the sacred name Jesus.

I. THE name of Jesus was given to the Word made flesh, not by man, but by God himself: *And his name shall be called Jesus*, (that is, Saviour.) *St. Luke*, ii. A name of gladness, of hope, and of love. A name of *gladness*; because, if the remembrance of our past sins afflicts us, this name cheers us, reminding us that the Son of God was made man to become our Saviour. My beloved Saviour, thou didst come down from heaven to seek me: and I, a miserable sinner, have turned my back upon thee and despised thy friendship and love! But nevertheless thou desirest my salvation. O my Jesus, I thank thee and love thee.

II. A name of *hope*; because he who prays to the Eternal Father in the name of Jesus, may hope for whatever grace he asks for: *If you ask the Father any thing in my name he will give it to you*. *St. John* xiv. 14. O my God, relying on this promise, I ask thee, in the name of Jesus, to grant me the forgiveness of all my sins, perseverance in virtue, and the gift of thy holy love. Grant that the remainder of my life may never be employed in offending thee, but only in pleasing and loving thee as thou deservest.

III. A name of *love*. St. Bernard says, that the name of Jesus is a cipher which represents to us all that God has done for the love of us. So that the name of Jesus reminds us of all the sufferings that Jesus endured for us during his life and at his death. Hence, a devout author addressing himself to Jesus, says: "O Jesus, how much has it cost thee to be Jesus, that is, my Saviour!" O Jesus, write thy sacred name upon my poor heart and upon my tongue, in order that when I am tempted to commit sin, I may resist by invoking thee: when

tempted to despair, I may confide in thy merits : and on finding myself lukewarm in loving thee, thy name may inflame me by reminding me how much thou hast loved me. Thy name then shall always be my defence, my consolation, and the fire to inflame me with thy love. Grant me, O Jesus, while I live, to call on thee ; and when I die, to depart with thy holy name on my lips, saying with my last breath : "I love thee, my Jesus ; my Jesus, I love thee." Holy Mary, Queen of virgins, grant that in death I may invoke you also together with the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

On St. Francis of Sales.

January 29.

I. GREAT was the faith of St. Francis of Sales : such was his delight when he thought of the beauty and excellence of faith, that he was heard to exclaim : "O my God, the beauty of our holy faith " appears to me so delightful that I could die with " love for it ; and it seems to me that I ought to " enclose this precious gift which God has bestowed " upon me in a heart full of the sweetest perfumes " of devotion." Hence he was never satisfied with giving God thanks for having blessed him with the favour of being born a child of the true church : " Bountiful God," said he, " great indeed are the " favours by which thou hast bound me to thee : " but how shall I ever sufficiently thank thee for " having enlightened me with the true faith ?" And he declared that, although he had constantly had so much to do with heretics, he had never once doubted in the least of the truth of his faith. They who love God, never doubt of matters of faith : it

is only those who do not live according to the dictates of their faith who doubt of its truths.

II. Great also was the hope of St. Francis. He was always firmly convinced that God continually watches over our good, and hence he was always calm and intrepid in the midst of the greatest dangers. In the very many dangers which threatened his designs for the glory of God, he never lost confidence. And this he always endeavoured to instil into others. On one occasion he is related to have said to a timid soul: "Do you desire to be long entirely to God? and why do you fear on account of your weakness? Do you hope in God? " and shall he who hopes in God be ever confounded? Be not afraid of your fears." He who loves God much, confides much in him. Love always discards fear.

III. Great also was his love for God. The very fear which he experienced in the early part of his life, that he might not be worthy to love God for all eternity, ruined his health and nearly deprived him of life. It was this his great charity, which inspired him to expose himself on so many occasions to death for God's sake. He was so careful to expel from his heart every affection which was not directed towards God, that he said: "If I knew that there existed in my heart a single fibre of affection that is not from God and directed towards God, I would immediately pluck it out." He always aspired to the purest love of God. He said, "I would rather not exist than not be entirely devoted to God." In one of his letters, he writes, "My heart is filled with an unbounded desire of being for ever sacrificed to the pure love of my Saviour." And he tells us how tender his love was, especially for Jesus Christ, when he says, "Let us contemplate our divine Redeemer nailed to the cross and dying upon it for the love of us.

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“ Ah why do we not cast ourselves upon the same
 “ cross to die with him on it, for his having been
 “ pleased through love for us to die there himself?
 “ I will embrace him and will never leave him. I
 “ will die with him, and will burn in the flames of
 “ his love. The same flame shall consume the
 “ divine Creator and his creature. I will live and
 “ die upon his bosom; neither life nor death shall
 “ ever separate me from him.” Holy Saint, since
 you are now in heaven loving Jesus face to face,
 obtain for me the grace to love him, as you loved
 him in your life time.

NOVENA OF MEDITATIONS,

FOR THE NINE DAYS PRECEDING THE FEAST OF
 THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN,
 BEGINNING WITH THE 24th OF JANUARY.

These Meditations are composed on the Litany of Loretto, and may serve as a preparation for all the principal Feasts of the Blessed Virgin.

FIRST DAY.

I. *HOLY Mary, pray for us.* As in the litany of the Blessed Virgin the Church instructs us to repeat so often the petition, “*pray for us*,” it would be well, before we enter upon the titles by which we address the Blessed Virgin, to consider how much her prayers for us avail with God. Happy the Christian for whom Mary intercedes! Jesus is pleased to be besought by his Blessed Mother, that

he may grant her whatever she asks of him. One day St. Bridget was allowed to hear Jesus thus address Mary: "Mother, ask of me what you "please; for your petition will not be in vain. "You never denied me any thing on earth, I will "never deny you any thing in heaven." St. Bernard says: "To be heard by her Son, is to obtain "what she asks for." Hence let us ever pray to this divine Mother, if we desire to ensure our salvation; let us say to her with St. Andrew of Crete: "We beseech you, therefore, O holy Virgin, to "succour us by your prayers; prayers which are "more precious than all the treasures of the earth; "prayers which obtain for us a great abundance "of graces; prayers which confound our spiritual "enemies and triumph over all their artifices."

II. *Holy Mary.* The name Mary is a name of salvation. This name is not of the earth, but comes from heaven; hence, says St. Epiphanius, it was not given to Mary by her parents, but by the express will of God. Hence it is, that after the name of Jesus, the name of Mary is above every name: for God has bestowed upon it grace and sweetness to obtain every good for him who invokes it. "O Mary," says St. Bernard, "you "cannot be named without inflaming the heart of "him who pronounces your name and loves you." And the blessed Henry Susone exclaims: "What "must you yourself be, if your name is so delight- "ful and lovely?" A name full of blessings: St. Bonaventure says, that the name of Mary cannot be invoked without profit to him who invokes it. Above all, this name has the power of subduing the temptations of the infernal one. O Blessed Lady, had I always invoked you in the time of temptation, I should not have fallen! For the future I will not cease to invoke you, saying: Mary assist me, Mary succour me; and do you obtain for me

the grace of always invoking you in the dangers which threaten my soul.

III. *Holy Mother of God.* If the prayers of the saints prevail much with God; how much more will the prayers of Mary prevail with him; those are the prayers of his servants, these the prayers of his Mother. St. Antoninus says that the prayers of Mary have the nature of command with Jesus Christ, and that it is impossible that the Mother of God should not be heard. Hence, says St. Bernard, "let us seek for grace, and let us seek for it through "Mary; for she is the Mother of God, and cannot "be refused." Holy Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me. Look down upon the miseries of my soul, and have pity on me. Pray for me and do not cease to pray for me until you welcome me into heaven. O Mary, you are my hope, do not forsake me: *Holy Mother of God, pray for us.*

SECOND DAY.

I. *MOTHER of divine grace.* Mary is called by St. Anselm, "the mother of all graces:" and also the "treasury of grace". Hence St. Bernardin of Sienna writes: "All good things and graces are dispensed "through her hands, to whom she wills, when she "wills and how she wills." The Lord has placed in her hands all the riches of his grace, that she may enrich those who love her. If then, O holy Queen, I love you, I shall not be poor as now I am. I love you after God above all things; obtain for me still greater tenderness and love for your goodness. St. Bonaventure assures me that "he whom "you desire to save will be saved." Hence will I say to you with the same Saint. "O safety of

“ those who invoke you, save me.” Save me from sin and from hell.

II. *Mother most pure.* This most spotless and pure virgin mother, renders all her servants chaste and pure. St. Ambrose says, that even while she was upon the earth she inspired a love of purity into all who saw her. She was called a lily among thorns: *As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.* *Cant.* ii. 2. Frigenius, the author of the life of St. Thomas of Aquin, says, that even the images of this chaste dove, extinguish the fire of sensuality in those who look on them with devotion. And the Ven. John of Avila relates, that many, tempted against purity, have been preserved by such devotion. O how exceedingly great is the virtue of the name of Mary, especially in overcoming temptations of impurity! O most pure Virgin, by your holy intercession deliver me from this vice: grant that in such temptations I may ever have recourse to you and invoke you, so long as these temptations continue to assault me.

III. *Mother undefiled.* Mary was that undefiled one who appeared in the eyes of God all beautiful and without spot: *Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is no spot in thee.* *Cant.* iv. 7. Hence it was that she was constituted, as St. Ephrem calls her, “ the reconciliatrix of sinners.” And as she herself says in the Canticles: *I am become in his presence as one finding peace.* viii. 10. St. Gregory says, that if a rebel should attempt by his presence to pacify his king, he would provoke him the more to indignation. Hence Mary being destined to treat for peace between God and man, it was not fitting that she should appear a sinner and an accomplice of the sin of Adam; and therefore the Almighty preserved her free from every fault or stain. O immaculate Queen, so dear to God, do

not disdain to look down upon the many spots and wounds of my soul! look on me and succour me. God who so much loves you, denies you nothing; nor will you refuse to listen to those who invoke you. O Mary, to you do I have recourse, have pity on me: *Mother undefiled pray for us.*

THIRD DAY.

I. *MOTHER most amiable.* Richard of St. Laurence says, that “the Blessed Virgin was amiable even in the eyes of God himself.” *How beautiful art thou, my love,* says the spouse in the Canticles, *how beautiful art thou!* iv. 1. *One is my dove, my perfect one is but one.* vi. 8. It is certain, says Suarez, that God loves Mary more than all the other saints; and with reason, because she alone has loved God more than all men and angels. O most beautiful Mary, O most amiable Mary, you gained the heart of God: take to yourself my poor heart, and make me holy. I love you and place my confidence in you. *Mother most amiable pray for us.*

II. *Mother of our Redeemer.* St. Bonaventure calls Mary the “mediatrix of our salvation;” and St. John Damascen, in a certain sense “the salvation of the world.” For two reasons may Mary be entitled to these names: first, on account of the consent which she gave to the incarnation of the Word, by which, says St. Bernardin, she procured the salvation of all; and secondly, on account of the consent which she gave to the death of her Son, being willing that for our salvation he should be sacrificed on the cross. I will therefore say to you, O Mother of my Saviour, who offered to God the life of your Son, save me now by your holy intercession.

III. *Virgin most venerable.* "To say of Mary, says St. Anselm, "that she is the Mother of God, " exceeds all that can be said or conceived, except we "speak of God himself." "Hence," the same Saint continues: "O Blessed Lady, nothing is equal to "you: for, either every thing is above you, and "this is God; or below you, and this is every "thing which is not God." In a word, St. Bernardin says, that the perfect excellence of the Blessed Virgin can be known only by God. And the Blessed Albertus Magnus says, that she could not approach nearer to God, without becoming God. Most worthy therefore is the Mother of God of our profound veneration; because God could not make her greater than he has done by making her his Mother. O Mother of God, and my Mother, Mary, have compassion on a poor sinner who loves you and places his confidence in you. *Virgin most venerable, pray for us.*

FOURTH DAY.

I. *VIRGIN most renowned.* The holy Church styles the Blessed Virgin, *most worthy of all praise*; because, as St. Ildelfonsus says, all the praise that is given to the Mother, redounds to the honour of the Son. Hence St. George of Nicomedia very well says, that God accepts of the praises given to Mary as given to himself. Hence Richard of St. Laurence writes: "Those who honour her in this "life, she will honour in the next." St. Anselm says, that as Mary by being the Mother of God was the means of saving sinners, so sinners by proclaiming her praises, will obtain salvation. All cannot preach her praises, but all may praise her, and teach others, their relations and friends, by

familiar conversation, the excellencies of Mary, her power, her mercy, and thus induce them to be devout to her. O Queen of heaven, from this day forward I will do all in my power to induce others to venerate and love you. Accept this my will, and assist me to accomplish it; enrol me amongst the number of your servants, and never suffer me to become any more the slave of the devil.

II. *Virgin most powerful.* Who among the saints is so powerful with God as his most holy Mother? She obtains, says St. Bernard, all that she asks for. St. Peter Damian says, that when Mary approaches to pray, it is almost to command; for her Son so honours her as never to refuse her what she asks for. Hence says St. Germanus: "You are, O "Mother of God, all-powerful in procuring the "salvation of sinners, and stand not in need of re- "commendation with God, since you are the Mo- "ther of true life." O Mary, you can make me holy by your intercession; in you do I confide.

III. *Virgin most merciful.* As Mary is powerful with God, so is she merciful to those who have recourse to her for her holy intercession: "Neither "power nor will can be wanting to her," says St. Bernard. She cannot want the power to assist us, because she is the Mother of God, and she cannot want the will, because she is our mother. "And "who," says St. Bernard, "has ever had recourse "to you, Mary, and has been confounded? If "there be such a one, let him cease to praise your "clemency." St. Bonaventure says that the Blessed Virgin has so great a desire that we should pray to her, to dispense her favours more abundantly to us, that she is offended not only with those who injure her, but also with those who do not pray to her. No, we need not pray much to this Mother of mercy to obtain assistance: it is sufficient to ask it of her with confidence: "Her pity is more quickly

"excited, than we can pray to her," says Richard of St. Victor; and he adds the reason: "for she "cannot know our miseries and not relieve them." Behold then my miseries, O Mary, and succour me. *Virgin most merciful, pray for us.*

FIFTH DAY.

I. *VIRGIN most faithful.* Happy is he who attends at the gates of Mary, as the poor attend at the gates of the rich, to obtain assistance! *Blessed is the man, says she, that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates.* *Prov. viii. 34.* Would that we were as faithful in serving this most holy mother, as she is in succouring us when we pray to her! Mary, in the words applied to her in the offices of the Church, promises to those who serve and honour her, freedom from sin and eternal salvation. *They that work by me, shall not sin.* *They that explain me shall have everlasting life.* *Prov. xxiv. 30, 31.* She calls upon all to have recourse to her, and promises them whatever favours they may hope for: *In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue. Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits.* *Eccli. xxiv. 25, 26.* St. Laurence Justinian applies this other text of Ecclesiasticus to Mary: *Her bands are a healthful binding.* *vi. 31.* And he adds: "Why bands? "unless it be that she binds her servants, that they "may not run through the fields of licentiousness." Mary binds her servants, that they may not take too much liberty, which may be the cause of their ruin. O Mother of God, in you do I confide; you can preserve me from falling into sin. My sovereign Queen, do not abandon me; obtain for me

the grace rather to die than to forfeit the friendship of God.

II. *Cause of our joy.* As, after the darkness and gloom of the night the morning is the cause of gladness, so, after the darkness of sin, which reigned over the earth for four thousand years before the birth of Jesus Christ, the birth of Mary, our morning star, was the cause of joy and gladness to the whole world. "At the birth of Mary," says a holy Father, "the morning arose." The morning is the harbinger of the sun, and Mary was the harbinger of the Word incarnate, the sun of justice, and our Redeemer, who by his own death delivered us from eternal death. With good reason therefore does the Church sing forth on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. "Thy nativity, O holy Mother of God, brought tidings of joy to the whole world." And as Mary was the beginning of our joy, so is she now the completion of it; "for," says St. Bernard, "Jesus Christ has placed all his merits in the hands of his Mother, that we may receive every good thing through the means of Mary." O Mother of God, you are my joy and my hope, since you deny your favour to no one, and obtain from God whatever you please.

III. *Vessel of singular devotion.* Devotion, as St. Thomas teaches, consists in the conformity of our will to the will of God. This was the principal virtue which made the Blessed Virgin so dear to God. And this was signified by what our Saviour said to the woman that called the womb that bore him *blessed*: *Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it.* St. Luke xi. 28. By which words, as Ven. Bede writes, our Lord meant that the Blessed Virgin was more happy in uniting her will with the divine will, than in being his Mother. Justly is that flower a figure of Mary, which goes round with the sun and is always

turned to its rays. The divine will alone was the only object and happiness of Mary's heart, as she sings of herself: "My spirit rejoiced in God my "Saviour." Blessed indeed were you, O holy Virgin, who were united and always united with the divine will! Obtain for me the grace of ever living in conformity with the will of God.

SIXTH DAY.

I. *MYSTICAL Rose.* It is said of Mary, in the Canticles, that she was the garden of God closed up: *My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed.* iv. 12. In this garden, says St. Bernard, God planted all the flowers which ornament the Church, and amongst others, the violet of humility, the lily of purity and the rose of charity. The rose is red; and hence Mary is called a rose on account of the ardent charity with which her heart was always inflamed towards God and towards us. And where can we find an advocate so intent upon our salvation, or who loves us so much as Mary? O my dear Mother, O that I knew how to love you as you love me! I will not, however, cease to do all in my power to honour you and love you; most sweet Virgin Mary, obtain for me the grace of being faithful to God and to you.

II. *Tower of David.* So may we apply to Mary those words of the Canticles: *Thy neck is as the tower of David: a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armour of valiant men.* iv. 4. St. Bernard says that the tower of David stood high in Sion; and that Mary is called the tower of David, to denote her great eminence and dignity: "As Sion "was a place most high, so was the Blessed Virgin "most exalted." Hence it is said in the Psalms: *The*

foundations thereof are in the holy mountains. lxxxvi.

1. St. Gregory explains this, by saying, that the Blessed Mother was more holy in the first moments of her life, than other saints were at the moment of their death. Ah my Queen and my Mother! I delight in your greatness, and am ready rather to give my life, than that the least degree of your glory should be taken from you, if it ever could be diminished! O that by shedding my blood I were able to bring all nations to honour and love you as you deserve!

III. *Tower of ivory.* Such also is the language of the Canticles: *Thy neck as a tower of ivory.* vii.

4. Mary is called a *neck*, because she is the mystical neck by means of which, from the head Jesus Christ, are poured forth upon us the faithful, who are members of the mystical body of the Church, that vital spirit and that divine help, which preserve in us the life of grace. Thus speaks St. Bernard: and he adds, that from the time that Mary conceived in her womb the Word incarnate, she received such honour from God, as that no one might receive any grace but through her hands. "As "ivory is beautiful and strong, so," says Rupert, "is Mary as a tower of ivory, lovely to God, and "terrible to the devil." Since then, O Blessed Lady, you are so much loved by God that you are able to obtain all good things for us; and since you are so terrible to the devil, you can deliver us from all his snares. Have pity on us, who glory in living under your protection.

SEVENTH DAY.

I. *HOUSE of gold.* Gold is the symbol of love. Whence Blessed Albertus Magnus calls Mary:

“ The golden temple of charity.” And with good reason ; for, as St. Thomas observes, as all things in the temple were covered with gold, so the Blessed Virgin was all sanctity. Mary was that house of gold which the Word incarnate chose for his dwelling on this our earth : *Wisdom hath built herself a house.* *Prov. ix. 1.* “ Now this house of God is so “ rich, that,” says Richard of St. Laurence, “ it can “ amply relieve all our miseries.” O Mary, you are so much beloved by God, that you desire that he should be loved by all men. This is the favour which above all others I now ask, and hope to obtain from you ; implore for me a great love of God.

II. *Ark of the covenant.* Hesychius calls Mary : “ An ark more spacious than that of Noe ;” because there were received into the latter only two animals of every species, but under the mantle of Mary all are received, sinners as well as the just. St. Gertrude was permitted on one occasion to see this, when she was surprised to behold a multitude of wild beasts, lions, tigers, and such like, all taking refuge under the mantle of Mary, and Mary not driving them away, but kindly caressing them, that they might not fly from her. The animals that entered into the ark remained animals ; but sinners who take refuge under the mantle of Mary do not continue such. She entirely changes their hearts, and makes them dear to God. The same Blessed Virgin, in a vision to St. Bridget, said : “ However “ grievously a man may have sinned, if he return “ to me with true purposes of amendment, I am “ alway ready to receive him immediately. I re- “ gard not the sins with which he is loaded, but “ only the good-will with which he comes to me ; “ for if his will be good I do not disdain to heal “ his wounds, for I am called and am truly the “ Mother of mercy.” O Mother of mercy, I will therefore say to you with St. Augustin, remember,

that no sinner ever had recourse to you for assistance and was rejected : I, a miserable sinner, have recourse to you, and place my confidence in you.

III. *Gate of heaven.* Mary is called the gate of heaven, because no one can enter heaven but through her means. "No one," says St. Bonaventure, "can enter into heaven but through Mary, as "through a gate." "My power is in Jerusalem." (Mass of B. V. M.) says this most holy Queen ; and Richard of St. Laurence adds : "by obtaining "what I desire and introducing whomsoever I "please." Hence, St. Bonaventure writes : "Those "who enjoy the favour of Mary, are acknowledged "by the citizens of heaven ; and those who have "her mark," (that is, the favour of being her ser-
vants) "are inscribed in the book of life." St. Ber-
nardin calls Mary : "The book of life;" and says, that those who are inscribed therein, through devo-
tion to her, are secure of salvation. Most holy
Mother, I love you, be a Mother to me and promote
my salvation : O suffer not any one of your ser-
vants who love you, to be condemned to hell to
pour out maledictions against you.

EIGHTH DAY.

I. *MORNING star.* Mary is called by St. John Damascen : "The star which immediately precedes "and announces the rising of the sun." As the morning star precedes the sun, so devotion to the Blessed Virgin precedes the sun of divine grace ; for, says St. Germanus, "devotion to the Blessed "Virgin is a sign that a person is either already in "the state of grace or will speedily acquire it." Our Blessed Lady is called by the Church, "the "star of the sea," because, as St. Thomas explains

it, "as mariners are directed to port by a star, so are men directed to heaven by Mary." Hence St. Bernard admonishes us: "Turn not away your eyes from the brightness of this star, if you would not be overwhelmed by the storms and the tempests." And he continues: "Following this star you shall not go astray; under its protection you shall not be afraid: under its auspices you shall arrive safe at the end of your voyage."

II. *Health of the sick.* Mary is called by St. Simon Stock the "Medicine of sinners;" and by St. Ephrem, not only the medicine, but the health also of sinners: "The sure health of those who have recourse to her." Hence he who has recourse to Mary, will not only find a remedy but health, as she herself promises to those who endeavour to find her: *He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from our Lord. Prov. viii. 35.* Let us not fear that on account of the corruption of our wounds, she will not deign to take care of us: she is our Mother; and as a natural mother has no horror of dressing the wounds of her son, so will not she our heavenly Mother refuse to dress and heal our wounds when we have recourse to her. Hence St. Bernard says: "O Mother of God, you have no horror of a sinner, however defiled he may be; if he sighs after you, you will save him from yielding to despair."

III. *Refuge of sinners.* Such is Mary called by St. Germanus: "The most secure refuge of sinners, their greatest safety, by whom no sinner is rejected. She receives all sinners, and this without demur." St. John Demascen calls her: "The city of refuge for all those who fly to her." Hence St. Anselm thus addresses her: "You embrace with maternal affection even the most despised sinner in the world, and do not abandon him until you have reconciled his miserable soul to

“ his Judge.” If then, most holy Lady, you are the refuge of all sinners, you are also my refuge. Thou who despisest no sinner who has recourse to thee, do not despise me now recommending myself to thee: Refuge of sinners, pray for us.

NINTH DAY.

I. *COMFORTER of the afflicted.* St. Germanus says: “Who, after your divine Son, has so much care of the human race as you have? Who is so ready to console us in all our afflictions?” No, replies St. Antoninus; “No one is found among the saints so to compassionate our infirmities as the Blessed Virgin Mary.” And because the infirmities which most afflict us are those of the soul, the Blessed Henry Susone calls Mary “the most faithful comforter of sinners.” It is sufficient to expose the wounds of our souls to Mary, to induce her immediately to succour and console us with her prayers. As Richard of St. Victor writes, her pity even goes before our petitions, and induces her to assist us. Let us therefore say to her with St. Bonaventure: “O Mary, be always our consolation, but particularly at the hour of our death: come then and take our souls and present them to your divine Son, who will then be our Judge.”

II. *Help of Christians.* Such is she called by St. John Damascen: “The prompt and prepared help of Christians, delivering us from evils.” “The help of Mary is all-powerful,” as St. Cosmas of Jerusalem writes, “to save us from sin and hell.” “Thou,” says St. Bernard, “art invincible in behalf of thy servants, fighting against the wicked spirits who assault us.” Hence is she called in the

Canticles (vi. 3.) *Terrible as an army set in battle array.* My sovereign Queen! had I always had recourse to you, I should never have been overcome by my enemies: from this day forward you shall be my fortress; in temptations I will always have recourse to you, and from you will hope for victory.

III. *Queen of martyrs.* With good reason is Mary styled the Queen of martyrs, since she underwent a martyrdom during the sufferings and death of her Son on the cross, which far exceeded all the sufferings of any of the saints for the faith of Christ. "*His mother was standing near the cross.*" Mothers in general fly away when they behold their children dying and can no longer afford them any help; but Mary would not leave her Son until she saw him give up the ghost: "*She was standing near the cross.*" And while Jesus was agonizing on the cross, she was offering to the Eternal Father the life of her Son for our salvation: but in making such an offering she suffered an agony, and endured a struggle more terrible than death. O my most sorrowful Mother, through the merit of your sufferings at the foot of the cross, obtain for me a true sorrow for all my sins, and the love of Jesus my Redeemer; and through that sword which then pierced your soul, when you beheld him bow down his head and expire, I beseech you to assist me at the hour of my death, and to obtain for me eternal salvation, that I may come to love you for ever with the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus.

On the Purification of the Blessed Virgin.

February 2.

I. THE time being come when Mary was to go according to the law to be purified in the temple, and to present Jesus to his Eternal Father, she sets out together with Joseph. Joseph takes with him the two turtle doves that were to be offered on the occasion; and Mary takes her dear infant, the divine Lamb, to offer him to God, in token of that great sacrifice which Jesus was one day to offer on the cross. O God, suffer me to join my offering with that of Mary; I offer to thee thy beloved Son made man, and through his merits I beseech thee to bestow thy grace upon me. I do not deserve it, but Jesus, in order to obtain it for me, offered himself in sacrifice to thee. For the love therefore of Jesus have pity on me.

II. Mary enters into the temple, and makes an oblation of her Son, in the name of the whole human race. But on this day Jesus Christ himself particularly offers himself to his Eternal Father. Behold me, does he say, O my Father, to thee do I consecrate my whole life; to thee do I offer my whole self for the salvation of the world. O how wretched should I have been, my dear Redeemer, if thou hadst not made satisfaction to the divine justice for me! I thank thee for having made satisfaction for me, and love thee with my whole heart. And whom shall I love, if I love not thee, my God, who has sacrificed thy life for me?

III. This sacrifice was more dear to God than all the sacrifices of men and angels could have been for all eternity; because from this one offering of Jesus, the Eternal Father received infinite honour, and infinite satisfaction. Jesus Christ once said

to Blessed Angela of Foligno: "I have offered "myself for thee, that thou mayest offer thyself to "me." Yes, my Jesus, since thou hast offered thy life to thy Eternal Father for me, I offer my life and my whole self to thee. Hitherto I have most ungratefully despised thee, but thou hast promised to forget the crimes of him who repents; O Jesus, I do sincerely repent of all my sins, and would willingly die of sorrow for them. I was dead in my sins, but now I hope for life from thee, and my life shall be to love thee, my sovereign good. Grant that I may love thee, I ask no more. As to the good things of this world, dispense them to those who desire them; my only desire is the treasure of thy love. O Jesus, thou art my all. O Mary, my Queen and my Mother, through you do I hope for every good.

On St. Joseph.

March 19.

I. TO be convinced how much the intercession of St. Joseph prevails with Jesus Christ, we have only to consider these words of the Evangelist: "*And he was subject to them.*" The Son of God employed thirty years in assiduously obeying Joseph and Mary! It was sufficient for Joseph by the least word or sign to show that he wished him to do anything, Jesus immediately obeyed. This humble obedience of Jesus teaches us that the dignity of Joseph is above that of all the other saints, except that of the Queen of the saints.

II. Let us hear what St. Teresa says of the confidence which all should place in the protection of St. Joseph: "To the other saints," she says, "it ap-

" pears that the Lord may have granted to succour
 " us on particular occasions; but to this saint, as
 " experience proves, he has granted to help us on
 " all occasions. Our Lord would teach us, that as
 " he was pleased to be subject to Joseph upon
 " the earth, so he is now pleased to grant whatever
 " this saint asks for in heaven. Others whom I
 " have recommended to have recourse to Joseph,
 " have known this from experience. I never knew
 " any one who was particularly devout to him, and
 " did not continually advance more and more in
 " virtue. For the love of God, let him who be-
 " lieves not this, make his own trial. And I do
 " not know how any one can think of the Queen
 " of angels, at the time when she laboured so much
 " in the infancy and childhood of Jesus, and not
 " return thanks to Joseph for the assistance which
 " he rendered both to the Mother and to the Son."

III. We should be particularly devout to St. Joseph, that he may obtain for us a happy death. He, from having preserved the child Jesus from the snares of his enemies, has the particular privilege of delivering those who are dying from the snares of the devil. Besides, from the assistance which he rendered for so many years to Jesus and to Mary in providing them by his own labour with food and lodging, he has the privilege of obtaining for those who are devout to him at the time of their death, a particular assistance from Jesus and Mary. My holy protector, St. Joseph, by my sins I have deserved an evil death; but if you defend me, I shall not be lost. You have not only been a great friend of my Judge, but also his guardian and foster father, recommend me therefore to your divine Jesus, who so much loves you. I place myself under your protection, accept of me for your constant servant. And through that holy company which you enjoyed in the life of Jesus and Mary, obtain

for me from God that I may never be separated from their love. And through the assistance which Jesus and Mary rendered you at your death, obtain for me a particular assistance at the hour of my death, from Jesus and Mary. Holy Virgin, through the love which you cherished towards your spouse Joseph, fail not to assist me at the hour of my death.

On the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin.

March 25.

I. IT being the will of God to send his Son made flesh into the world to save lost man, God chose a virgin for his mother, who of all virgins was the most pure, the most holy, and the most humble. While Mary was praying in her house for the coming of the Messias, an angel saluted her, saying: *Hail, full of grace: the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou amongst women.* *St. Luke i.* How great was the humiliation of this virgin in hearing herself thus commended! She was not elated, but troubled and silent: “*She was troubled at his saying.*” O Mary, are you so humble, and shall I be so proud? O obtain for me, I beseech you, the holy virtue of humility.

II. Did these praises lead her to suppose that she might perhaps be destined to become the mother of the promised Redeemer? No, they only made her conceive a great fear of herself; so that it was necessary for the angel to encourage her, saying: “*Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found grace with God.*” And then he announced to her that she had been chosen to become the mother of the Saviour of the world: “*Behold thou shalt conceive in*

*“thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou
“shalt call his name Jesus.”* O most blessed Mary! how were you then and are you still dear to God! have pity on me.

III. Why, says St. Bernard, O most holy Virgin, why do you hesitate to give your consent? The Word eternal waits to clothe himself with human flesh and to become your Son: we also all wait, who are condemned to eternal death; if you consent to become his mother, we shall all be redeemed. Hasten, most blessed Lady, to reply; do not delay the salvation of the world, which depends upon your consent. But to our great joy, Mary replies: *“Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it
“done unto me according to thy word.”* As if she had said; behold me the slave of the Lord, ready to perform whatever the Lord requires of me: if he has chosen a slave for his mother, let not the slave be praised, but only the bounty of the Lord for thus honouring her. O most humble Mary, you became by your humility so pleasing to God, as to induce him to make you the Mother of his Son our Redeemer. I know that your Son denies you nothing that you ask of him; beseech him therefore to pardon me all my sins; beseech him to grant me his holy love; beseech him to enable me to persevere in virtue until the end of my life. In a word, recommend my poor soul to him: your recommendation will not be disregarded by a Son who so tenderly loves you. O Mary, through your holy intercession I hope to obtain the grace to secure my salvation.

FIFTEEN MEDITATIONS
ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

For the last fifteen days of Lent.

Meditation First.

SATURDAY BEFORE PASSION SUNDAY.

On Jesus entering in triumph into Jerusalem.

I. OUR Blessed Redeemer, the time of his passion being near at hand, leaves Bethania to come to Jerusalem. When he is nigh to that ungrateful city, and beholds it, he weeps: *Seeing the city he wept over it. St. Luke xix. 14.* He weeps at beholding her, because he foresees the sad ruin her children will soon bring upon her and upon themselves, by the excesses of iniquity which they are about to commit in putting to death the Son of God. O my Jesus! in weeping over Jerusalem, thou weepest also over my soul, at the sight of my sins, by which I have obliged thee to condemn me to hell, after having died to save me. Cease to weep for the evil which I have committed by despising thee, my sovereign good; and have compassion on me.

II. Jesus Christ enters into the city; the people meet him and receive him with gladness and delight. To do him honour, some of them strew palm branches in the way, while others spread their garments for him to pass over. Oh! who will now say that this Lord, acknowledged as he now is for the Messias, and received with such distinguished marks of respect, will soon have to return the same way to execution, carrying a heavy cross upon his

shoulders? My dear Jesus, the people now hail thee, saying: *Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. St. Matt. xxi. 9.* Soon, however, will they loudly demand of Pilate to condemn thee to the death of the cross, saying: “*Away with him, away with him! crucify him, crucify him!*” Go thou, Christian, and cry unto him with affection: “*Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!*” Be thou ever blessed for having become the Saviour of the world; without this, we had all been lost. O my Saviour, be thou a Saviour to me.

III. When evening is come, after all these acclamations, there are none who will invite him to abide in their houses for the night; and he is obliged to return to Bethania. My beloved Redeemer, if others will not receive thee, I will receive thee into my poor soul. There was a time when I expelled thee from my soul; but now I esteem thy being with me more than all the treasures of the earth. I love thee, O my Saviour; what can ever separate me from thy love? only sin; but from this, O Jesus, do thou preserve me; and do you also, O most sacred Mother of God, preserve me from it by your holy intercession.

Meditation Second.

PASSION SUNDAY.

On Jesus praying in the garden.

I. JESUS Christ, knowing that the hour of his passion is now come, after having washed his disciples' feet, and instituted the most holy sacrament of the altar, in which he left us his whole self, re-

tires into the garden of Gethsemane, where he is aware that his enemies will come to take him. Here he begins to pray; and behold he is oppressed with great fear, sadness and sorrow: *He began to fear, to grow sorrowful and to be sad: St. Mark xiv. and St. Matt. xxvi.* The fear of the bitter death he is about to suffer on Calvary, and of all the agony and desolation which are to accompany it, overwhelms him. In the course of his passion, the scourges, the thorns, the cords and other torments will afflict him one by one; but in the garden they come altogether upon him by anticipation and grievously torment him. He embraces them all for the love of us, but in embracing them he trembles and is agonized: *Being in agony he prayed the longer. St. Luke xxii. 44.*

II. Again, he is oppressed with so great a sadness at the sight of what he is to suffer, that he implores his Father to deliver him from it: *My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. St. Matt. xxvi. 39.* He prays thus to teach us that, in tribulations, we may indeed call upon God to deliver us from them; but that, at the same time, we must resign ourselves to his blessed will, and say as Jesus said: "*Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*" Yes, my Jesus, not my will, but thine, be done. I embrace all the crosses thou art pleased to send me. Thou hast suffered, though innocent, so much for the love of me; and it is just that I, a sinner, deserving of hell, should suffer whatever thou pleasest for the love of thee.

III. Again, he is oppressed with such great sorrow that he would die, did he not reserve himself to suffer death upon the cross when he has undergone much more for us: *My soul is sorrowful even unto death. St. Matt. xxvi.* This great sorrow is occasioned by the sight of the future ingratitude of mankind, who instead of corresponding

with his excessive love, will offend him by their multiplied sins; and the sight of this afflicts him so much as to cause him to sweat blood: *And his sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground.* St. Luke xxii. 44. O Jesus, thy cruel executioners, their scourges, thorns, and the cross, did not so grievously afflict thee, in the garden, as my cruel and ungrateful sins. Give me, therefore, a share in thy sorrow and abhorrence of them, that I may bitterly bewail them until the end of my life. I love thee, O my Jesus; receive a wretched sinner who desires to love thee. O Mary, recommend me to your Son, sorrowful and afflicted for the love of me.

Meditation Third.

MONDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

On Jesus taken and conducted to Caiphas.

I. JESUS knowing that the Jews are near at hand, coming to seize him, arises from prayer and goes to meet them; and without making any resistance, allows himself to be taken and bound by them: *They took Jesus, and bound him.* St. John xviii. 12. Stand astonished, Christian, thy God is bound like a criminal by his own creatures! See how some hold his hands together, while others bind them, and others strike and insult him; and this innocent Lamb of God allows himself to be bound and struck by them at their pleasure and is silent: *He was offered because it was his own will, and he opened not his mouth: he shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer.* Isa. liii. 7. He speaks not a word, he

makes no complaint, for he has already given himself up to die for us ; and therefore he allows himself to be bound as a sheep and opens not his mouth.

II. Jesus is conducted, bound with cords, into Jerusalem. Those who were asleep, are awaked by the tumult of the people passing by, and ask what prisoner it is that they are leading along ; and they are answered : " It is Jesus of Nazareth, who " has been discovered to be an impostor and a se- " ducer of the people." They present him before Caiphas, who is rejoiced to see him, and interrogates him concerning his disciples and his doctrine. Jesus answers him, that he has always spoken openly ; and calls upon the Jews who surround him to witness what he had said : "*Behold these " know what things I have said.*" Upon which, one of the servants of the high-priest strikes Jesus a blow on the face, saying : "*Answerest thou the high- " priest so ?*" But, O God, how could so mild and meek an answer give occasion to such an affront ? Ah, my Jesus, thou sufferest this to make amends for the affronts I have offered to thy eternal Father.

III. The high-priest conjures him, in the name of God, to tell him if he really is the Son of God ; Jesus replies that he is : upon hearing which Caiphas, instead of prostrating himself upon the ground to adore him as his God, rends his garments, and turns to the other priests, saying : *He hath blas- phemed, what further need have we of witnesses ? Behold, now, you have heard the blasphemy. What think you ?* And they all unanimously answer : *He is guilty of death.* St. Matt. xxvi. 65. Now, as the Evangelists relate, they begin to spit in his face and abuse him with blows and buffets ; and blindfolding him they strike him, and then scornfully say to him : "*Prophecy unto us, O Christ, who " it is that struck thee ?*" O Christian soul, behold

thy Jesus; see what he is become for thy sake in the hands of the rabble! O, how can I not love him when I behold him thus humbled for the love of me? And how could I ever have been so wicked as to offend him by my many sins, after he has suffered so much for my love? O love of my soul, forgive me, I will never more offend thee. I love thee, my sovereign good, and am sorry above every evil for having despised thee. O Mary, implore your Son, ill-treated and abused for my sake, to pardon me.

Meditation Fourth.

TUESDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

On Jesus led to Pilate and Herod, and Barabbas being preferred before him.

I. THE next morning, Jesus is led to Pilate to be condemned to death. But Pilate perceives that Jesus is innocent, and tells the Jews that he can find no reason for passing sentence of death upon him. Seeing however that they are obstinately bent upon his death, he sends him to be judged by Herod. Herod, seeing Jesus before him, is desirous to witness a miracle wrought by Jesus, of whose wonders he had heard so much. Our Lord, however, will not answer the impertinent questions of this rash man. O how miserable is that poor soul to whom God no longer speaks! My Redeemer, I have deserved this, for not having obeyed thy many calls; I have deserved that thou shouldst no more speak to me, but abandon me: yet no, my Jesus, thou hast not yet abandoned me; speak therefore to me: "*Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth;*" tell me what thou wouldest have me to do, for I will do all to please thee.

II. Herod, seeing that Jesus gives him no answer, indignantly dismisses him from his house, making a mockery of him before all the persons of his court; and as the greatest mark of his contempt, clothes him in a white fool's garment, and sends him back thus arrayed to Pilate: *And Herod with his army set him at nought; and mocked him, putting on him a white garment, and sent him back to Pilate. St. Mark, xxiii. 11.* Behold how Jesus, clothed in the fool's coat, is led through the streets of Jerusalem. O my despised Saviour, was it necessary that thou shouldst be treated as a fool? Ah if the divine wisdom is thus treated by the world, blessed is he who cares not for the honours of the world, and desires to know nothing but Jesus Christ crucified, and to love only sufferings and contempt, saying with the apostle: *I judge myself not to know any thing among you, but Jesus Christ; and him crucified. 1 Cor. ii.*

III. The Hebrews on the feast of the pasch had a right to demand from the Roman governor, the liberation of a prisoner of their own choice. Pilate therefore asks the people, whom they will have liberated, Barabbas, or Jesus: *Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus that is called Christ. St. Matt. xxvii. 17.* Barabbas is iniquitous, a murderer, a robber, and abhorred by all: Jesus is innocent. But the Jews cry out, let Barabbas live, but let Jesus die. O my Jesus, and thus have I also cried out, when I have deliberately offended thee for the sake of some wretched indulgence, and have preferred the gratification of my wicked inclinations before thee, and rather than lose such gratification have been willing to lose thee, my sovereign good. But now I love thee above all things, more than my own life. Have pity on me, O God of mercy. And do you, O Mary, become my advocate.

Meditation Fifth.

WEDNESDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

On Jesus scourged at the pillar.

I. *THEN Pilate took Jesus, and scourged him.*
St. John, xix. 1. O unjust judge, thou hast pronounced him innocent, and dost thou condemn him to so cruel and so disgraceful a punishment? Now see, my soul, how, after this iniquitous sentence, the executioners lay hold of the divine Lamb, drag him into the hall, and bind him fast with cords to a pillar. O happy cords, which bound the hands of my dear Redeemer to the pillar, bind also my poor heart to his, that from this day forward I may never seek or desire anything but what is agreeable to his blessed will.

II. See how they now take their scourges in their hands, and at a given signal begin all at once to lash the sacred flesh of our dear Lord, which at first appears livid, and is soon all streaming with blood. Alas! how are the scourges and the hands of the executioners all dyed, and the ground already soaked with blood! With the violence of the strokes how does the blood gush forth, and even pieces of the flesh of Jesus Christ fly in the air! That divine body is already all torn and mangled: but those barbarous wretches continue to add lash upon lash and torture upon torture. And during all this while what is the behaviour of Jesus? He is silent, he makes no complaint, but patiently suffers this excess of torment, to appease the wrath of divine justice in our behalf: *Like a lamb without voice before his shearer, so openeth he not his mouth.* *Acts viii. 32.* Go quickly, my soul, and bathe thyself in his sacred blood. My beloved Redeemer,

I behold thee all mangled for my sake: I cannot therefore doubt that thou lovest me, and lovest me with an unbounded love. Every one of thy wounds is but too sure a pledge of thy love, and with too great reason demands from me a return of love. Thou givest me, O Jesus, thy blood without reserve; it is just therefore that, without reserve, I should give my whole heart to thee. Receive it, I beseech thee, and make it ever faithful to thee.

III. Oh God! If Jesus Christ had only suffered but one lash for the love of me, I ought to burn with love towards him, saying: "A God has been "pleased to be stricken for me!" But no, he is not satisfied to receive only one lash, but, to make satisfaction for my sins, he is pleased that his whole body should be torn and mangled, as the prophet foretold of him: "*He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins,*" so as to appear as a leper covered with wounds from head to foot: *We have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted.* Isa. liii. 4, 5. While then, O Christian, Jesus is scourged at the pillar, he is thinking of thee, and offers up to God his bitter torments to deliver thee from the eternal scourges of hell. O God of love, how could I have lived so many years without loving thee! O sacred wounds of Jesus, wound my poor soul with love for a God who has so loved me. O Mary, mother of grace, obtain this love for me.

Meditation Sixth.

THURSDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

On Jesus crowned with thorns and treated as a mock king.

I. THE soldiers having finished scourging Jesus Christ, join altogether in the hall, and scarcely allow him time to put on his clothes, when they strip him again to insult and deride him as a mock king. They put on his shoulders an old ragged garment of scarlet for the imperial purple, a reed in his hand for a sceptre, and a crown of thorns on his head for a diadem: *And stripping him, they put a scarlet cloak about him. And plattting a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand.* St. Matt. xxvii. 28, 29. And because they cannot with their hands alone force the thorns sufficiently deep into his sacred head, they strike the barbarous crown with all their force with the cane which they had given him for a sceptre. *And spitting on him, they took the reed and struck his head.* Ibid. But what were the thorns which most tormented the head of my Redeemer? Alas! they were my wicked thoughts. O my Jesus, I detest and abhor more than death itself all those base pleasures by which I have so often afflicted thee, my God, who hast been so good to me. But since thou hast made me sensible how much thou hast loved me, I desire to love thee alone.

II. How does the blood now flow in streams from that pierced head upon the face and bosom of Jesus; and thou, my Saviour, dost not even bewail so much unjust cruelty! Thou art the King of heaven and of earth, but now thou art made the king of ignominy and torments, the mockery of all Jerusalem! But the prediction of Jeremias must

be verified, that thou shouldst one day be drenched with ignominy and sufferings: *He shall give his cheek to him that striketh him, he shall be filled with reproaches.* Lam. iii. 3. My beloved Jesus, I have hitherto despised thee; but now I esteem and love thee with my whole heart, and desire to die for thy love.

III. But no, these men for whom thou sufferest are not yet satisfied with tormenting and deriding thee; after having thus tormented thee and made thee a mock king, they kneel down before thee and with derision hail thee as king of the Jews. And now with yells and laughter they buffet thee, and redouble the cruel pains of thy head pierced with thorns. *And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying: Hail king of the Jews. And they gave him blows.* St. Matt. xxvii. 29. and St. John xix. Go thou at least, O Christian, and acknowledge Jesus for the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and thank him and love him, now that thou beholdest him become for the love of thee the king of sorrows. O my dear Lord, do not remember the affliction I have occasioned thee. I now love thee more than myself. Thou alone deservest all my love; and therefore do I desire to love only thee. I fear my own weakness, but thou wilt give me strength. And O Blessed Virgin Mary, help me by your holy intercession.

Meditation Seventh.

FRIDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

On Jesus presented to the people, with the words, Behold the Man.

I. PILATE, seeing Jesus again brought before him, so dreadfully mangled and disfigured with

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being scourged at the pillar and crowned with thorns, that he scarcely recognizes him for the same person, imagines that the sight of him, in such a lamentable condition, will move the people to compassion ; and for this purpose he leads Jesus forth upon an open gallery and presents him to the people, saying : “ *Behold the man.* ” As though he had said : be now at last satisfied with what this innocent man has already suffered. Behold him reduced to a state in which he cannot long exist. Release him, let him go, while yet a little life remains in him. Do thou also behold him, Christian soul ; see thy Lord standing before thee, bound and half naked, all covered with blood and wounds, and see to what a condition thy divine shepherd is reduced, to save thee, his lost sheep.

II. While Pilate is exhibiting our mangled Lord to the Jews, the Eternal Father from heaven invites us to look upon Jesus Christ in such a state, and says to us in like manner : “ *Behold the man.* ” This, O sinner, this wounded and despised man, is my beloved Son, who suffers all this to make satisfaction for thy sins ; behold him and love him. O my Father and my God I behold thy Son, and acknowledge him and love him ; and hope to love him for ever ; but, I beseech thee, do thou also behold him, and for the love of this thy Son have pity on me ; pardon me and give me grace to love no other but thee.

III. But what do the Jews answer when they behold the king of sorrows ? They make the air resound with their yells of : “ *Crucify him, crucify him.* ” And seeing that Pilate, notwithstanding their insolent demands, is inclined to liberate him, they excite his fears by telling him : *If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar’s friend.* St. John xix. 12. Pilate, however, still resists, and replies to them : “ *Shall I crucify your king ?* ” and they an-

swer: “*We have no king but Cæsar.*” Ah my adorable Jesus, these people will not acknowledge thee for their king, and tell thee that they will have no king but Cæsar. I here confess thee to be my King and my God; and protest that I desire no other king of my heart but thee, my love and my only good. Wretched indeed have I been to refuse thee for a time for my King, and to refuse to obey thee: but now I desire that thou only shouldst reign over my will. Grant that I may obey thee in all things whatever thou pleasest. O holy will of God, thou art the love of my soul. O Mary, pray for me, your prayers cannot but be heard.

Meditation Eighth.

SATURDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

On Jesus condemned by Pilate.

I. PILATE at last, after having so repeatedly declared Jesus to be innocent, and again declaring him such, protesting at the same time his own innocence of the blood of so just a man: *I am innocent of the blood of this just man.* St. Matt. xxvii., pronounces sentence against him, and condemns him to death. O injustice, such as was never before witnessed in the world! at the same time that the judge declares the accused innocent, he condemns him as guilty! O my Jesus, it is I who deserve death, not thou. Thou art nevertheless willing to make satisfaction for me: it is not therefore Pilate, but thy own Father, who justly condemns thee to suffer the punishments due for my sins. I love thee, O Eternal Father, who dost condemn thy innocent Son to deliver me, a guilty

sinner. I love thee, O Eternal Son, who dost accept the death that I have deserved.

II. Pilate, after condemning Jesus, gives him up into the hands of the Jews, for them to do with him as they please : *He delivered Jesus up to their will.* *St. Luke* xxiii. 25. Thus it always happens when an innocent person is condemned ; his punishment is not limited, but he is left to the mercy of his enemies, to be made to suffer and to be put to death as they please ! Unhappy Jews ! how do they now imprecate a dreadful curse upon their own heads, saying : *His blood be upon us and upon our children.* *St. Matt.* xxvii. And that curse, unhappy race, which you then called down upon yourselves, you carry upon you to this day, and to the end of the world shall you carry still upon you the malediction of that innocent blood. O my Jesus, have pity on me, by my sins I have been the occasion of thy death. But I will not be obstinate like the Jews ; I will love thee for ever, for ever, for ever.

III. The unjust sentence of death upon the cross is now read before our Saviour. He consents to it, and with perfect submission to his Father's will, humbly and obediently accepts of it : *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.* *Phil.* ii. 8. Pilate from the earth exclaims : *Let Jesus die.* The Eternal Father from heaven pronounces : *Let my Son die.* And the divine Son replies : *Behold, I obey, I accept of death, even the death of the cross.* My beloved Redeemer, thou acceptest of the death that I have deserved : be thy mercy blessed for evermore : what thanks can I return thee ! But since thou who art innocent acceptest for me the death of the cross, I who am a guilty sinner will accept of the death which thou hast appointed for me, with all the pains that may accompany it ; and from this hour do I unite it with thy holy death, and offer it to thy Eternal

Father. Thou hast died for the love of me; I will die for the love of thee. O through the merits of thy holy death, grant me to die in thy grace, and in the ardour of thy love. O Mary, be mindful of me.

Meditation Ninth.

PALM SUNDAY.

On Jesus carrying his cross to Calvary.

I. THE sentence being published against our Saviour, the executioners immediately seize upon him with great fury, strip him again of his ragged scarlet garment, and put on him his own clothes to lead him forth to be crucified on Calvary, the place of execution for malefactors: *They took off the cloak from him, and put on him his own garments, and led him away to crucify him.* St. Matt. xxvii. 31. They now take two rough beams and soon form them into a cross, and command him to carry it to the place of execution. What barbarity, to load a criminal with the gibbet upon which he is to die! But, O Jesus, thou hast made thyself as a criminal by taking my sins upon thy own shoulders.

II. Jesus refuses not the cross, but embraces it with love, as being the altar upon which he is destined to consummate the sacrifice of his life for the salvation of man: *And bearing his own cross, he went forth to that place which is called Calvary.* St. John xix. 17. The condemned criminals now leave Pilate's house, and in the midst of them goes our Lord and Saviour. O spectacle of astonishment for the whole heavens and earth! to behold the Son of God going to die, even for those very men who are about

to put him to death! Behold the prophecy verified: *And I was as a meek lamb, that is carried to be a victim.* Jer. xi. 19. Jesus is now such a piteous figure, that the Jewish women who accompany him are moved to tears: *They bewailed and lamented him.* St. Luke xxiii. 27. My dear Redeemer, through the merits of this thy last most painful journey, strengthen me to bear my cross with patience. I accept of whatever suffering and contempt thou art pleased to appoint for me: thou hast rendered them amiable and sweet, by embracing them for the love of me; give me strength peaceably to support them.

III. Behold, my soul, behold thy Redeemer passing along, see how the blood streams down from the fresh wounds of his sacred person, see how he is crowned with thorns and loaded with the cross. Alas! how does every step increase the pain of all his wounds! O what a torment must the heavy cross be to him; pressing upon his mangled shoulders, and forcing the crown of thorns still deeper into his head and temples! Oh God, what pain and torment at every step! Let us consider the sentiments of love with which Jesus approaches Calvary, where death awaits him. Ah my Jesus, thou goest to die for me, and I will come to die for thee. Hitherto I have turned my back upon thee, and I would now willingly die for having done so; but for the future I will never forsake thee, my Redeemer, my God, my love, and my all. O Mary, be a mother to me, and obtain for me the grace to carry my cross with patience.

Meditation Tenth.

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

On Jesus nailed to the cross.

I. JESUS no sooner arrives at the top of Mount Calvary, quite spent and exhausted, than they strip him of his garments, which now cleave fast to his wounded flesh, and throw him down upon the cross. Jesus offers them his out-stretched hands, and at the same time offers the sacrifice of his life to his Eternal Father, and implores him to accept of it for the salvation of men. The executioners now brutally seize their nails and hammers, and nailing his hands and feet, fasten him to the cross. O sacred hands, which by a single touch healed so many sick and infirm, why are you now nailed to the cross? O sacred feet, so often wearied in seeking us, the lost sheep, why are you now pierced with so much pain and torture? When a nerve is wounded in the human body, the pain is so acute as to cause convulsions and fainting: what then must be the excess of pain endured by Jesus when thus nailed through the hands and feet, in which so many nerves and tendons all meet together? O my sweet Saviour, how dearly has thy desire to save me, and to acquire my love, cost thee; and yet have I been so ungrateful as many times to despise thy love for a mere nothing! But I now esteem it above all things.

II. The cross, together with Jesus, is now raised up into the air, and is let fall with a jolt into the hole prepared for it in the rock, in which it is fastened with stakes and stones. In this situation, hanging upon the cross, Jesus is left to die. Afflicted and gasping on this bed of sorrows, desolate

and sad, he looks around for a friend to console him, but finds none. My dear Lord, surely thine enemies are now moved to compassion, seeing that thou art dying ! But no, some of them load him with injuries, and others deride and blaspheme him, saying : *"If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. He saved others, himself he cannot save."* O barbarous people, he is now dying as you wished him to die; cease now at least from tormenting him with your mockery and derision.

III. See, O Christian, how much your dying Redeemer suffers on the cross. Every member has its particular torture, and no one of them can succour another. Alas ! he endures the pain of dying every moment ! It may be truly said, that during the three hours that Jesus suffers in agony upon the cross, he suffers as many deaths as there are moments in which he remains upon it. He there finds not the least rest or relief. If he bears upon his feet, or supports himself by his hands, whichever way he moves, he does but increase his pain, while his sacred body is hanging by its own wounds. Come, Christian soul, and, overcome with such a sight, approach that cross ; kiss indeed that altar upon which thy Lord is dying, the victim of his love for thee. Cast thyself under his feet, and let his divine blood stream upon thee. Yes, my dear Jesus, let thy sacred blood cleanse me from all my sins, and make me all on fire with the love of thee, my God, who hast willingly died for the love of me. O most sorrowful Mother, standing at the foot of the cross, pray to Jesus for me.

Meditation Eleventh.

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

On Jesus hanging on the cross.

I. JESUS hanging on the cross ! Behold the proof of the love of God. Behold the last appearance made upon the earth by the Word incarnate ; an appearance of sorrow, but still more of love. St. Francis of Paula, meditating on one occasion on divine love in the person of Jesus Christ crucified, and being in an ecstasy, exclaimed three times : “ O God of charity ! ” Signifying that we can never comprehend the greatness of God’s love in dying for us upon the cross.

II. O my beloved Jesus, if I look upon thy exterior on the cross, I behold nothing but wounds and blood. If I look into thy interior, I behold nothing but affliction and grief. I read upon the cross that thou art king, but where are the marks of thy royalty ? I see no royal throne, but the disgraceful cross. I see not royal purple, but thy mangled and bloody flesh : no other crown but one of thorns which torments thee. Ah, how do all these proclaim thee to be the king of love ! yes, for the cross, the nails, the crown of thorns, and all thy wounds are pledges of thy love for me.

III. Jesus from his cross demands, not so much our compassion as our affections ; and if he calls for compassion, he calls for it only in order that compassion may move us to love him. He indeed deserves all our love, because he is infinite goodness ; but upon the cross he entreats us to love him at least through compassion. O my Jesus, who shall not love thee, who confesses thee to be God, and beholds thee upon the cross ? O what darts

of fire dost thou cast into our souls from this throne of love! Oh how many hearts dost thou draw to thyself from the cross! O wounds of my Jesus, O sweet furnaces of love, receive me, that I may burn in your flames; not in the flames of hell which I have deserved, but in the flames of the love of God, who, overwhelmed with torments, willingly died for the love of me. My dear Redeemer, receive me, a sinner, who, with great sorrow for ever having offended thee, desires and sighs to love thee. I love thee, O infinite goodness, I love thee, O infinite love: hear me, O my Jesus, I love thee, I love thee, I love thee. O Mary, Mother of beautiful love, obtain for me still greater love, a love which may consume me for the love of God, who died consumed with love for me.

Meditation Twelfth.

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

On the last words of Jesus on the cross.

I. WHILE Jesus is loaded with outrages on the cross by his enemies, what return does he make them? He prays for them, saying: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" O Eternal Father, hear thy well-beloved Son, who dying beseeches thee to forgive me also, who have so many times grievously offended thee. Jesus turning to the good thief, who is imploring him to take pity on him, thus consoles him: "*This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.*" Oh how true is that which the Almighty saith by his prophet Ezechiel: *But if the wicked man do penance.....I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath*

done Ez. xviii. 21, 22. Oh, my Jesus, that I had never offended thee! but since the evil is done, forget, I beseech thee, the displeasure I have caused thee; and through the bitter death thou didst suffer for me, take me after my death to thy kingdom; and while I live, grant that thy love may ever reign in my heart.

II. Jesus agonizing on the cross, tormented in all the members of his body, and afflicted in all the sentiments of his soul, seeks for some one to console him. He beholds Mary, but the sight of his most sorrowful mother only afflicts him the more. He looks around, and there is no one to comfort him. He asks for consolation from his Father, but his Father seeing him loaded with all the sins of men, even he abandons him: and now Jesus cries out with a loud voice: "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" This abandonment on the part of his Eternal Father renders the death of Jesus Christ the most bitter death that could ever be endured by any penitent or martyr, because it is the extremity of desolation. O Jesus, how have I been able to live so long forgetful of thee? I thank thee, for not having been forgetful of me. Oh I beseech thee to remind me continually of the bitter death which thou hast embraced for my love, that I may never forget the love which thou hast shown me.

III. Jesus knowing that his sacrifice is now almost consummated, exclaims: "*I thirst.*" And some of the executioners put into his mouth a sponge filled with gall and vinegar. But, O Lord, thou who dost not complain of the many torments which are taking away thy life, why dost thou complain of thirst? Oh, my Jesus, I well understand the cause of this; it is because thy thirst is the thirst of love; because thou lovest us, thou desirest that we should love thee. Assist me, I beseech

thee, to expel from my heart every affection which is not directed towards thee: grant that I may love no other but thee, and desire nothing but to do thy will. O Mary, my Mother, obtain for me the grace to will nothing but what God wills.

Meditation Thirteenth.

MAUNDAY THURSDAY.

On Jesus dying on the cross.

I. OUR loving Redeemer now draws near his end. See, Christian soul, how his beautiful eyes become dim, his face pale and ghastly, his heart almost without motion, and his whole frame convulsed with the agonies of death. Hear how, after tasting the gall and vinegar, he exclaims: "*It is consummated.*" Calling to mind all the sufferings, poverty, contempt, and sorrow, which he had endured during his life, and offering them all to his Eternal Father, turning to him, he says: "*It is consummated.*" Father, behold now; by the sacrifice of my life, is completed the world's redemption, the work which thou didst impose upon me. And turning to us also, he repeats: "*It is consummated,*" as though he should say: O ye sons of men, give me your love, for I have done all, and can do nothing more to captivate your hearts with love towards me.

II. Behold at length, Jesus is on the point of expiring. Come, ye angels of heaven, come and assist at the death of your King. And you, O Mary, his most sorrowful mother, draw nearer to the cross, and look more attentively on your Son, he is now breathing his last. Behold him, how, after com-

mending his blessed soul into the hands of his Eternal Father, he calls upon death, and permits his life to be taken away. Come, O death, does he say, hasten to do thy office, take away my life, and save my sheep. The earth trembles, the graves open, the veil of the temple is rent in twain; Jesus, through excess of torment loses all the strength and warmth of his sacred body, bows down his head upon his bosom, draws his last breath and expires: *And bowing down his head he gave up the ghost.* St. John xix. The people seeing him expire, and perceiving that he now moves no longer, exclaim: "He is dead, he is dead." And Mary also with intense grief exclaims: "O my Son, thou art dead."

III. He is dead, O God! who is dead? the author of life, the only begotten Son of God, the Lord of the universe is dead. O death, thou hast filled heaven and earth with astonishment. O infinite love! a God sacrifices his blood and even his life, and for whom? for his own ungrateful creatures, dying in a sea of ignominy and torments, in order to make satisfaction for their crimes. O infinite goodness! O infinite love! O Jesus, thou hast died for the love of me: grant that I may never live one moment without loving thee. I love thee, my sovereign good, I love thee, O Jesus, who hast died for me. O most sorrowful Mother, Mary, help me your servant to love your Son Jesus.

Meditation Fifteenth.

HOLY SATURDAY.

On the Blessed Virgin Mary on Calvary at the death of Jesus.

I. *NOW there stood by the cross of Jesus, his Mother.* St. John xix. 25. Let us consider in this Queen of martyrs a species of martyrdom of all others the most cruel, a mother standing to behold the death of her innocent son upon an infamous gibbet. *She stood.* From the time that Jesus was taken in the garden, his disciples abandoned him, but Mary abandons him not; she continues with him until she sees him expire before her eyes upon the cross. *She stood by.* Mothers in general fly from the sight of their children, when they behold them suffering and cannot assist them, even if willing themselves to endure their children's sufferings: hence when they see them suffer and have it not in their power to succour them, they cannot endure such a sight, and stand afar off. But Mary beholds her Son in the midst of torments, she sees that his sufferings are depriving him of life; yet she flies not, she goes not away to a distance, but draws nigh to the cross, where her Son is dying. O most sorrowful Mother, do not refuse me to attend at the death of our dear Jesus.

II. *She stood by the cross.* The cross then is the bed on which Jesus resigns his life: the bed of sorrows, by which this afflicted Mother stands beholding Jesus wounded and lacerated with thorns and scourges. Mary observed that her poor Son, hanging by three nails, finds neither ease nor rest; she desires to afford him some relief, she desires at least, since he must die, to have him expire in her own arms: but nothing of all this is allowed her.

O cross, does she exclaim, give me my Son ; thou art the punishment of malefactors, but my Son is innocent. But do not afflict thyself, most sacred Mother, it is the will of the Eternal Father that the cross shall not yield up Jesus to thee until he has expired. O Queen of sorrows, obtain for me sorrow for my sins.

III. *There stood by the cross of Jesus, his Mother.* Consider, Mary standing at the foot of the cross beholding her Son : her Son, but Oh God, what kind of Son ! a Son who from eternity had chosen her for his Mother, and in his love for her had preferred her before all mankind and the angels : a Son most beautiful, most holy, and most amiable : a Son who had always been obedient to her : a Son who was her only love, because he was the Son of God. And this Mother had to behold such a Son die in torments before her eyes ! O Mary, the most afflicted of Mothers, I compassionate your tender heart, particularly when you beheld your Jesus abandoned on the cross, fetch his last gasp and expire ; and for the love of this thy Son, dead for my salvation, recommend my poor soul to him. And thou, my Jesus, through the merits and sorrows of Mary, have pity on me, and grant me to die for thee, as thou didst die for me. I will say to thee with St. Francis of Assissium : " May I " die, O Lord, for the love of thy love, who wast " pleased to die for the love of my love."

THREE MEDITATIONS

ON HEAVEN, FOR EASTER.

Meditation First.

EASTER SUNDAY.

On Heaven.

I. O HOW blessed are we, if we now suffer with patience the labours and afflictions of this present life! Trials, fears, infirmities, persecutions and crosses, will all one day have an end, and will, if we be saved, all become to us sources of joy and glory in heaven. *Your sorrow, says our Blessed Saviour, shall be turned into joy.* *St. John xvi. 20.* So great are the delights of heaven that they can neither be understood nor conceived: *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him.* *1 Cor. ix. 2.* Eye hath not seen beauty like to that of paradise; ear hath not heard harmony like to that of paradise: nor can the heart of man conceive what delights God has prepared for those who love and serve him. It is delightful to behold a country diversified with hill and dale and wood and water: it is delightful to behold a beautiful garden of fruits and flowers and fountains: but Oh, how much more delightful is it to behold heaven!

II. To understand how great the joys of heaven must be, it is sufficient to know that in that happy kingdom a God omnipotent reigns, intent upon the happiness of all the blessed souls who reign with

him. St. Bernard says that heaven is a place where there is "nothing you would wish not to have, and every thing you would desire to have." In heaven there is no night, nor heat, nor cold, but one everlasting day always serene, everlasting spring always delightful. There, are no more persecutions, nor envy, because all sincerely love one another, and every one rejoices in the happiness of his companions as if it were his own. In that blessed abode there are no more infirmities, nor sorrows, because the body is no longer subject to pain: there, is no poverty, because every one is completely rich, and has nothing more to wish for: nor are there any fears, because the soul being established in grace can no more sin, nor lose the sovereign good which it possesses.

III. *Every thing you would desire to have.* In heaven you will have all you can wish for. There shall the eye be gratified with beholding so beautiful a city, and its citizens all clothed in royal robes, for all are kings in that eternal kingdom. There shall we see the beauty of Mary, who will appear more beautiful than all the saints or angels. There shall we see the beauty of Jesus, which will immensely surpass that of Mary. There shall the smell be regaled with the odours of paradise. There shall the ear be delighted with the heavenly harmony of the songs of the blessed, who will sing for ever with exquisite sweetness the praises of God. O my God, I am not worthy of heaven, but deserve hell; yet thy death gives me hopes of obtaining heaven. I desire and pray for paradise, not so much to enjoy its delights as to love thee for ever, secure from ever losing thee again. Mary, my Mother, star of the sea, conduct me to heaven by your holy intercession.

Meditation Second.**EASTER MONDAY.***On Heaven.*

I. LET us figure to ourselves a soul which on her departure out of this world, enters into eternity in the grace of God. She presents herself with all humility, but with confidence before her Judge Jesus Christ. Jesus embraces her, blesses her, and welcomes her, with those consoling words: "Come, "my spouse, come, thou shalt be crowned." If the soul requires to be purified, he sentences her to purgatory, and she with all resignation embraces such a punishment, because she herself does not wish to enter heaven, that region of perfect purity, until she is completely purified. Her angel guardian comes to conduct her to purgatory: she first thanks him for the assistance he has rendered her during her life, and then obediently follows him. O my God, when will the day arrive which shall see me safe out of this world of dangers, and secure from ever again offending thee! Yes, I would voluntarily go to purgatory which awaits me: I would joyfully embrace every suffering: for it would be sufficient for me in that fire to love thee with my whole heart, for there I should not love any other but thee.

II. The purification being over, the angel will return, and will say to the soul: Arise, beautiful soul, thy pain is finished; come and enjoy the face of thy God, who looks for thee in paradise. Behold how the soul now ascends through the clouds and the stars and the spheres, and enters into heaven. Oh God, what will she exclaim on entering into that blessed country, and on first beholding that

city of delights? The angels and the saints, and particularly her patron saints, will come to meet her, and welcome her with ecstacies of joy, saying: Welcome, dear companion, welcome. O Jesus, make me worthy of such a happiness.

III. What consolation will she experience in meeting there her friends and parents, who have entered heaven before her! Still greater will be her joy in beholding Mary her Queen, in embracing her feet, and in thanking her for the many favours she has done for her. The Queen will embrace her and present her to Jesus, who will acknowledge her as his spouse. And Jesus will then present her to his Eternal Father, who will embrace her and say to her: "*Enter into the joy of thy Lord.*" And thus will she be blessed with the same happiness which he himself enjoys. Grant, O God, that I may so love thee in this life, that I may love thee for ever in the next. Thou art most worthy of all love, thou deservest all my love, and I will love no other but thee. Give me thy grace to do this. And you, O Mary, my Mother, pray for me and protect me.

Meditation Third.

EASTER TUESDAY.

On Heaven.

I. THE beauty of the saints, the celestial harmony, and all the other sensible delights of heaven are its least enjoyments. That which renders the soul completely happy is to see and to love God face to face. St. Augustin says, that if God should make the light of his countenance visible to the

souls in hell, that dismal prison, with all its torments, would become a heaven to them. Even on this earth, when God in prayer communicates to the soul the sweetness of his presence, and by a ray of light discovers his goodness and love towards her, so great is her delight that she feels herself dissolved and overflowing with love; and yet in this life we cannot behold God really as he is; we see him but very obscurely, and behind a thick veil; what then shall it be to behold him when he removes the veil, and allows himself to be seen openly face to face? O Lord, by having turned my back upon thee I have hitherto made myself unworthy of beholding thee; but relying on thy goodness and mercy, I hope to see and to love thee for ever in heaven. I speak thus, because I speak to a God, who died to purchase heaven for me.

II. In this world, although those who love God are the most happy, yet they cannot enjoy full and perfect happiness: the uncertainty of knowing whether they are worthy of the love or hatred of their beloved Lord, keeps them almost always in pain. But in heaven the soul is sure of loving God, and of being loved by him, and knows that the sweet bands of love by which she is united to God can never be broken for all eternity. Her love will be increased by her better knowledge of the love of God in creating her and dying for her; and also in giving himself to her in the Holy Eucharist. Her love will be increased by her distinctly beholding the graces by which he has conducted her to heaven: she will see that all those crosses which he sent her were all so many pledges of his desire to make her blessed. She will then see the mercies he has shown her, his lights and calls to repentance. She will behold from her happy station many souls condemned in hell for lesser sins than she committed, while she is saved, and in the pos-

session of God, secure from all danger of ever again losing him for all eternity. O my Jesus, when shall this too happy day arrive for me?

III. What will complete the happiness of the blessed, will be their certain knowledge that they shall enjoy God whom they now enjoy, for all eternity. If the blessed could entertain any fear of losing God, heaven would no longer be heaven. But no, the blessed are as certain, as God is certain, that the sovereign good whom they enjoy, will be their enjoyment for ever. Their happiness will not become impaired by time, but will always be new. The blessed will be for ever happy, always thirsting and always satiated. When then we are afflicted under the labours and troubles of this life, let us raise up our eyes to heaven, and console ourselves, saying: heaven, heaven! Sorrows will one day have an end, and will even become for us subjects of joy. The saints are waiting for us, the angels are waiting for us, Mary is waiting for us, and Jesus stands with crowns in his hands ready to crown us, if we be faithful to him. O my God, when will that day arrive when I shall possess thee, and shall be able to say to thee, thou love of my soul, I can never more lose thee? O Mary, my hope, cease not to pray for me, until thou beholdest me saved, at thy feet in paradise.

NOVENA OF THE HOLY GHOST,

WITH MEDITATIONS FOR EACH DAY, BEGINNING WITH
THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION.

THE novena of the Holy Ghost stands before all others, because it was first celebrated by the

apostles and the most holy Mary, in the upper chamber, and enriched with so many wonders and gifts, and principally with the gift of the Holy Ghost himself, who is a gift merited for us by the passion and death of Jesus Christ. This, Jesus himself makes known to us, when he says to his disciples: *If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.* St. John, xvi. 7. We well know by our faith, that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, through their mutual love for each other, and therefore that the gift of love which the Lord infuses into our souls, and which is the greatest of all gifts, is particularly attributed to the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul speaks: *The charity of God is poured abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us.* Rom. v. 5. Hence in this novena we should above all consider the great excellence and value of divine love, that we may desire to obtain it, and labour to be made partakers of it by devout exercises, and especially by prayer, for God has promised it to him who asks for it with humility: *Your Father from heaven will give the good Spirit to them that ask him.* St. Luke, xi. 12.

Meditation First.

On the fire of divine love.

GOD ordained in the old law, that fire should be kept continually burning upon his altar: *The fire on the altar shall always burn.* Lev. vi. 12. St. Gregory says that the altars of God are our hearts, in which he desires that the fire of his love should always burn. And hence the Eternal Father, not satisfied with having given us his Son Jesus Christ, to save

us by his death, would also give us the Holy Ghost, to dwell in our hearts, and keep them continually inflamed with his love. And Jesus himself declared, that it was in order to influence our hearts with this holy love, that he came into the world, and that he desired nothing more than to see it kindled: *I am come to send fire upon the earth: and what will I but that it be kindled?* St. Luke, xii. 49. Hence, forgetting the injuries and ingratitude he received from men in this world, when he had ascended into heaven, he sent down upon us the Holy Ghost. O most loving Redemer, dost thou then love us not only in thy sufferings and ignominies but also in thy heavenly glory? Hence it was that the Holy Ghost chose to appear in the form of fiery tongues: *And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were of fire.* Acts, ii. 3. And hence, the Church instructs us to pray: " May the Holy Ghost, we beseech thee, O Lord, " inflame us with that fire which our Lord Jesus " Christ came to cast upon the earth, and which he " ardently desired should be enkindled." This was the holy fire which has inspired the saints to do such great things for God, to love their enemies, to desire contempt, to renounce all worldly goods, and to embrace with cheerfulness, even torments and death. Love cannot remain idle, and never says: " It is enough." The soul that loves God, the more she does for her beloved, desires the more to do for him, in order to please him the more, and to draw down his love the more. This holy love is enkindled in mental prayer: *In my meditation a fire shall flame out.* Ps. xxxviii. 4. If therefore we desire to be on fire with the love of God, we must delight in prayer; this is the blessed furnace in which this divine ardour is enkindled.

Affections and Prayers.

O GOD, hitherto I have done nothing for thee, who hast done such great things for me. Alas, that my lukewarmness may not induce thee to vomit me out of thy mouth! O Holy Spirit, “*Warm with thy fire our hearts of snow,*” deliver me from my tepidity, and enkindle within me a great desire of pleasing thee. I now renounce all self-gratification, and will rather die than displease thee. Thou didst appear in the shape of fiery tongues: I consecrate my tongue to thee, that I may never use it to offend thee. Thou gavest me my tongue, O God, to praise thee, and I have made use of it to offend thee, and to draw others into offences against thee! I am sorry for these things with my whole soul. Oh, for the love of Jesus Christ, who in his mortal life honoured thee so much with his tongue, grant that I also from this day forward may honour thee, by always proclaiming thy praises, by frequently invoking thy assistance, and by speaking of thy goodness, and of the infinite love which thou deservest! I love thee, my sovereign good, I love thee, O God of love. O Mary, the most dear spouse of the Holy Ghost, obtain for me this holy fire.

Meditation Second.

On divine Love, as a light which enlightens us.

ONE of the worst effects which Adam’s sin produced in us, was its blinding our reason by means of the passions, which darkened the mind. O how miserable is the soul that allows itself to be ruled by any of the passions! Passion is a vapour, a

veil, which will not suffer us to see the truth. How can he fly from evil, who knows not what is evil? Our mental obscurity increases in proportion as our sins increase. But the Holy Ghost, who is called "*Light most blessed,*" with his divine rays, not only inflames our hearts to love him, but also dispels our darkness, and reveals to us the vanity of all worldly things, the value of eternal goods, the importance of salvation, the price of grace, the goodness of God, the infinite love which he deserves from us, and the immense love he has shown to us: *The sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the spirit of God.* 1 Cor. ii. 14. Man absorpt in the pleasures of the earth, knows but little of these truths, and hence he unhappily loves that which he should hate, and hates that which he should love. St. Mary Magdalen, of Pazzi, exclaimed: "O love not known, O love not 'loved !'" And hence St. Teresa said, that God is not loved because he is not known. Hence the saints ever sought light from God: "*Send forth thy light: illuminate our darkness: open thou our eyes.*" Yes, because without light, precipices cannot be avoided, and God cannot be found.

Affections and Prayers.

O HOLY and Divine Spirit, I believe that thou art truly God, and one God with the Father and with the Son. I adore and acknowledge thee as the giver of those lights, by which thou hast discovered to me the evil which I have done by offending thee, and the obligation which I am under of loving thee: I thank thee for them, and am exceedingly sorry for having offended thee. I have deserved to be abandoned by thee in my darkness, but I am sensible thou hast not yet abandoned me. Continue, O Eternal Spirit, to enlighten me,

and make me know still more and more thy infinite goodness, and give me strength to love thee for the future with my whole heart. Add grace upon grace, that so I may be sweetly overcome, and constrained to love no other but thee. I thank thee through the merits of Jesus Christ. I love thee, my sovereign good, I love thee more than myself. I desire to be all thine, accept of me, and suffer me not to depart from thee any more. O Mary, my Mother, assist me always by your holy intercession.

Meditation Third.

On divine Love, as a fountain which satisfies our thirst.

LOVE is called a "*living fountain, fire, charity.*" Our blessed Saviour said to the Samaritan woman: *But he that shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall not thirst for ever.* St. John, iv. 13. Love is the water which satisfies our thirst: for he that truly loves God with his whole heart, neither seeks nor desires any thing else: because in God he finds all that is good. Hence, happy in possessing God, he frequently exclaims with joy: "*My God and my all.*" Almighty God complains of many who seek for short and miserable delights from creatures, and leave him, who is infinite goodness, and the fountain of all joy: *They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.* Jer. ii. 12. Meanwhile God, who loves us, and desires to see us happy, cries out and makes known to all: *If any one thirst, let him come to me.* St. John, vii. 37. He who desires to be happy, let him come to me, and I will bestow

upon him the Holy Ghost, who will make him blessed, both in this life and in the next. He then that believes in Jesus Christ, and loves him, shall be enriched with so many graces, that from his heart shall spring up fountains of holy virtues, which shall not only preserve his life, but also give life to others. And indeed this water is the Holy Ghost, the sustaining love which Jesus Christ promised to send us from heaven, after his ascension: *Now this he said of the spirit which they should receive who believed in him: for as yet the spirit was not given, because Jesus was not glorified. St. John, vii. 39.*

The key which opens the channels of this blessed water, is holy prayer, which obtains all good things in virtue of the promise: "*Ask and you shall receive.*" We are weak and blind and poor and miserable, but prayer will obtain for us strength, and light, and wealth, and happiness. Theodoret says: "Prayer, though but one, can effect all things." He who prays, receives all he asks for. God desires to give us his graces, but he desires that we should pray for them.

Affections and Prayers.

LORD, give me of this water. O Jesus, with the Samaritan woman, I beseech thee, give me of this water of thy love, which may make me forget the earth, and live only for thee who art infinitely lovely. "*Water our barren clay.*" My soul is a barren soil which produces nothing but the weeds and the thorns of sin: Oh water it with thy holy grace, that it may yield some fruit to thy glory, before it leaves this world by death! O fountain of living water, O sovereign good, how often have I deserted thee for the defiled waters of the earth, which have deprived me of thy love! O that I had

rather died than offended thee! But for the future I will seek after nothing but thee my God. Succour me, and make me always faithful to thee. Mary, my hope, keep me always under your holy protection.

Meditation Fourth.

On divine Love, as the dew which fertilizes our souls.

THUS does the Holy Church teach us to pray: “*May the infusion of the Holy Ghost cleanse our hearts, and the inward aspersion of his dew fertilize them.*” Love fertilizes our good desires, our holy purposes, and the good works of our souls: these are the flowers and the fruits which the grace of the Holy Ghost produces. Love is also called dew, because it cools the heat of bad desires and temptations. Hence the Holy Ghost is also called: “*Refreshment in the excess of heat, and solace in our grief.*” This dew descends into our hearts in the time of prayer. A quarter of an hour’s prayer is sufficient to appease any passion of hatred or of inordinate love, however ardent it may be: *He brought me into the cellar of wine, he set in order charity in me. Cant. ii. 4.* Holy meditation is this cellar of wine, where love is set in order, to love God above all things and our neighbours as ourselves. He who loves God, loves prayer; and he who loves not prayer will find it morally impossible to overcome his passions.

Affections and Prayers.

O HOLY and Divine Spirit, I desire to live no longer for myself; the days which may remain to me of life, I desire to spend entirely in loving and

pleasing thee. On this account I beseech thee to grant me the gift of prayer. Come thou into my heart, and teach me to pray as I ought. Give me strength not to neglect prayer in the time of dryness and weariness; and give me the spirit of prayer, that is, the grace of praying to thee in such manner, and of offering thee such prayers, as may be most acceptable to thee. I have been lost by my sins; but I am sensible, from the favour which thou hast shown me, that thou desirest my sanctification and salvation; and I earnestly desire to become holy, that I may please thee, and to love more ardently thy infinite goodness. I love thee, my sovereign good, my love and my all; and because I love thee, I give my whole self to thee. O Blessed Virgin Mary, protect me.

Meditation Fifth.

On divine love as repose which refreshes us.

AGAIN, love is called *true rest in toil and sweat; refreshment in the excess of heat.* The principal effect of love is to unite the will of the lover with that of the beloved. For a soul that loves God, in every affront which it receives, in every grief which it endures, in every loss which it suffers, it is sufficient to make it resigned to know that such things are permitted to befall it by the will of its beloved. It finds peace and contentment in all tribulations and adversities, saying: *Such is the will of God.* This is that peace which surpasseth all the pleasures of sense: "*The peace of God which surpasseth all understanding.*" St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, by only repeating, "*It is the will of God,*" was always immediately filled with joy.

Every one in this world must carry his cross; but St. Teresa says that the cross is hard to those who drag it after them, but not to those who embrace it. Thus while the Lord strikes, he heals: *He woundeth, saith holy Job, and cureth; he striketh and his hands shall heal.* v. 18. The Holy Ghost, by his sweet unctions, renders even ignomnies and torments sweet and amiable. *Yea, Father; for so hath it seemed good in thy sight.* St. Matt. xi. 26. Thus ought we to say in all adversities which beset us: *So be it done, O Lord, for so hath it pleased thee.* And when any fear of temporal calamity alarms us, let us always say: "Do "with me, O Lord, whatever thou pleasest, I will "accept all as coming from thee." It is good, as St. Teresa advises, frequently in the course of the day to offer ourselves in this manner to God.

Affections and Prayers.

O MY God, how often, for the sake of following my own will, have I opposed thy holy will and despised it! I grieve for this evil above every other evil. O Lord, I desire from this day forward to love thee with my whole heart. "*Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.*" What wouldst thou have me to do? I will do all that thou requirest of me. Thy will shall be my only desire, my only love. Holy Spirit, strengthen my weakness. Thou art goodness itself: how can I love any other but thee? O do thou draw all the affections of my heart to thyself by the sweet attractions of thy holy love. I renounce all, to give myself entirely to thee. Accept of me, and succour me. O Mary, my Mother, pray for me.

Meditation Sixth.

On divine Love as the virtue which strengthens us.

LOVE is strong as death. *Cant.* viii. 6. As there is no created strength which can resist death ; so to the soul that loves God, there is no difficulty which yields not to love. When the soul that loves would please its beloved, love overcomes all losses, contempt, and sorrows : "Nothing is so hard but that it may be conquered by the fire of love." This is the most certain mark by which to know whether a soul really loves God, its being as faithful to him when things are adverse as when they are prosperous. St. Francis of Sales says : "that God is as "amiable when he chastises us as when he consoles "us, because he does both from love." Hence when he afflicts us the most in this life, he loves us the most. St. John Chrysostom considered St. Paul bound in chains more happy than St. Paul wrapt to the third heavens. Hence the holy martyrs, in the midst of their torments, rejoiced and gave thanks to God for the great favour which he conferred upon them in allowing them to suffer for his love. And the other saints, where tyrants were wanting to afflict them, became their own tormentors by the penances which they imposed upon themselves, in order to please God. St. Augustin says : "He who loves, either does not feel labour, "or loves it."

Affections and Prayers.

O God of my soul, I say that I love thee, and yet what do I do for thy love ? - Nothing. It is a sign therefore that I either do not love thee, or love thee not enough. Send therefore, O Jesus, the

Holy Ghost upon me, to come and strengthen me to do and to suffer something for thy love, before death overtake me. Suffer me not, O Lord, to depart out of this life cold and ungrateful, as I have hitherto been. Give me strength to love sufferings, on account of the many sins by which I have deserved hell. O my God, who art all goodness and all love, thou desirest to dwell in my soul, from which I have so often expelled thee: come and take possession of it, dwell within it and make it all thine own. I love thee, O my Lord, and if I love thee thou art with me, as St. John assures me: *He that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him.* 1 St. John iv. 16. Since therefore thou art with me, increase the flames, the chains of thy love, that I may neither desire, nor seek, nor love any other but thee, and thus bound by thy love never separate myself from thee any more. I desire, O Jesus, to be thine, to be all thine. O Mary, my Queen and advocate, obtain for me love and holy perseverance.

Meditation Seventh.

On divine Love inducing God to dwell in our souls.

THE Holy Ghost is called: *The soul's delightful guest.* The great promise made by Jesus Christ to those who should love him, was this: *If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever.* St. John xiv. 15. Hence the Holy Ghost will never abandon the soul, if the soul does not drive him away: *He does not forsake, unless he be forsaken.*

God then dwells in our souls when we love him,

but he declares that he is not satisfied with us unless we love him with our whole hearts. St. Augustin writes that the Roman senate would not admit Jesus into the number of their gods, because, said they, he is a proud god, who will have no other adored but himself. And so it is: he will not admit a companion in the heart that loves him; he must dwell there alone and be the only object loved. And when he sees that he is not the only object loved, he is jealous, as it were, as St. John Chrysostom writes, of those creatures which divide with him a heart which he desires to have entirely to himself. *Do you think that the Scripture saith in vain: To envy doth the spirit covet which dwelleth in you. St. James iv. 5.* In a word, as St. Jerome says, Jesus becomes jealous. Hence the heavenly spouse praises the soul which, as the turtle dove, lives alone and hidden from the world: *Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle dove's. Cant. i. 9.*: because he desires that the world should not take part of that love which he desires to have entirely himself. Again, the spouse is praised because she is, *a garden closed up. Cant. 5.* A garden closed up against all worldly love. Can it be that Jesus does not deserve all our love? "He gave his whole self "to thee," says St. John Chrysostom, "leaving "nothing for himself." He has given thee his blood and his life; nothing more remains for him to give thee.

Affections and Prayers

O my God, I see that thou desicest that I should be all thine. I have many times expelled thee from my soul, and yet thou disdainest not to return to me and to unite thyself to me. Oh do thou now take possession of my whole self. Now do I give myself entirely to thee; accept of me, O Jesus, and

grant that, for the future, I may never live one moment deprived of thy love. Thou seekest me, and I seek no other but thee. Thou desirest my soul, and my soul desires no other but thee. Thou lovest me, and I love thee ; and because thou lovest me, bind me in such manner to thee, that I may never more be separated from thee. O Queen of heaven, pray for me.

Meditation Eighth.

On divine Love as a sacred bond which binds us.

AS the Holy Ghost, who is increased love, is the indissoluble bond which unites the Father with the Word Eternal, so also he unites the soul with God : "Charity is a virtue," says St. Augustine, "uniting us with God." Hence St. Laurence Justinian with great joy exclaims: "O Love, how "strong is thy bond, which is capable of uniting "us with God!" The bonds of the world are bonds of death ; but the bonds of God are bonds of life and salvation : *Her bonds are a healthful binding.* *Eecl. vi. 31.* : because the bonds of God by means of love unite us with God, who is our true and only life.

Before the coming of Jesus Christ men fled from God, and being attached to the earth refused to be united with their Creator ; but our loving Lord has drawn us to him by the bonds of love, as the prophet Osee foretold : *I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bonds of love.* xi. 4. These bonds are his benefits, his lights, his calls to love him, and his promises of heaven ; but above all, they are the gifts which Jesus Christ has bestowed upon us in giving us himself in the sacrifice of the

cross and in that of the altar, and ultimately in sending down upon us the Holy Ghost. Hence the prophet Isaías exclaims: *Loose the bonds from off thy neck, O captive daughter of Sion.* lii. 2. O my soul, thou who art created for heaven, loose from off thy neck the bonds of the earth, and unite thyself to God by the bonds of love. *Have charity, which is the bond of perfection.* Coloss. iii. 14. Love is a bond which unites with itself all other virtues and makes the soul perfect: "Love," says St. Augustin, "and do what thou pleasest:" because he who loves God, carefully avoids giving any offence to his beloved, and seeks in all things to please him.

Affections and Prayers.

My dear Jesus, thou hast indeed done too much to oblige me to love thee, too dearly hast thou paid to purchase my love; too ungrateful therefore should I be, if I were to love thee but little, or to divide my heart between thee and creatures, after thou hast shed thy blood and laid down thy life for me. I desire to detach myself from all things else, in order to give my whole affections to thee. But I am too weak of myself to execute this desire; do thou, who inspirlest me with it, give me strength to execute it. Pierce my poor heart, O Jesus, with the sweet dart of thy love, that I may ever languish with the desire of thee, and be dissolved with the love of thee. May I ever seek only thee, desire only thee, and find only thee! O Jesus, I desire thee alone. Grant that I may ever repeat during life, and especially at the hour of my death: I desire thee alone. O Mary, my Mother, pray that from henceforth I may never desire any thing but God.

Meditation Ninth.

On divine Love as a treasure containing every good.

LOVE is that treasure, which, the Evangelist says, we should leave all things to purchase: for love makes us partakers of the friendship of God: *An infinite treasure to men, which they that use, become the friends of God.* Wis. vii. 14. "O man," says St. Augustin, "whither goest thou in search "of good things? seek the one only good, in whom "are all good things." But we cannot find the only good, namely God, unless we renounce the things of the earth. St. Teresa writes: "Detach "thy heart from creatures, and thou shalt find God." He who finds God, finds all that he can desire. *Delight in the Lord, and he will grant thee the desires of thy heart.* Ps. xxvi. 4. The human heart is continually seeking after good things, such as may make it happy; but if it seek them from creatures, how many soever it may acquire, it will never be satisfied with them; but if it seek only God, God will satisfy all its desires. Who but the saints are the most happy in this world? and why? because they desire and seek only God. A certain prince, going to the chase, saw a solitary running swiftly through a wood, and asked him what he was seeking for in that desert. The solitary replied: "And "thou, O prince, what art thou in quest of?" The prince: "I am going in quest of wild beasts." "And I," said the hermit, "am going in quest of "God."

The tyrant offered to St. Clement gold and gems, if he would renounce Jesus Christ; on which the Saint exclaimed with a deep sigh: "Alas, God is "put in competition with a little dirt!" Happy is he who knows the value of the treasure of divine

love, and seeks to obtain it! He who obtains it, will divest himself of all things else, that he may possess nothing but God: "When the house is on "fire," says St. Francis of Sales, "all the goods are thrown out of the windows." And Father Paul Segneri the younger, a great servant of God, was accustomed to say, that love was a thief which robbed us of worldly affections until we might truly exclaim: "What do I desire, but thee, "my God?"

Affections and Prayers.

My God, hitherto I have not sought thee, but myself and my own gratifications, and for these I have turned my back upon thee, my sovereign good. But I am consoled with the saying of Jeremias: *The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him. Lam. iii. 25.* My beloved Lord, I am sensible of the evil I have done in forsaking thee, and am sorry for it with my whole heart. I am sensible that thou art an infinite treasure; I will not abuse this light; I will leave all, and will choose thee for my only love. My God, my love, my all, I love thee, I desire thee, I sigh after thee. Come, O Holy Spirit, and consume, with thy sacred fire, every affection of my soul, which is not fixed on thee. Grant that I may be all thine, and conquer all things to please thee. O Mary, my advocate and Mother, help me by your holy prayers.

Meditation Tenth.

On the means of loving God and of becoming saints.

HE who loves God the most, becomes the greatest saint. St. Francis Borgia says, that it is by means of prayer that divine love is introduced into the human heart; and that it is by mortification that the heart is weaned from the earth, and rendered capable of receiving this sacred fire. The more there is of the earth in the heart, the less room is there for holy love. *Wisdom is not found in the land of them that live in delights.* Job xxviii. 13. Hence have the saints in all ages done all in their power to mortify self love and their senses. The saints are few, but we must live with the few, if we would be saved with the few. "Live with the few," says St. John Climacus, "if you would reign with the few." And St. Bernard says: "He who would lead a perfect life, must lead a singular life." But nevertheless, before all, in order to become saints, we must desire to become saints: we must desire and be resolute. Some are always desiring, but never put their hands to the work. "Of such souls," says St. Teresa, "the devil has no fear." On the contrary, the same Saint says: "God is the friend of generous souls." The devil tries to make it appear to be pride in us to think of doing great things for God. It would be pride, if we should think of doing them of our own strength; but it is not pride to resolve to become saints, to confide in God, and to say: *We can do all things in him who strengthens us.* We must therefore be of good heart; make firm resolutions and begin. Prayer can do all things. What we cannot accomplish of ourselves, we can do with the assistance of

God, which he has promised to give us whenever we ask for it from him. *You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you.* St. John xv. 7.

Affections and Prayers.

My dear Redeemer, thou desirest my love, and commandest me to love thee with my whole heart. Yes, my Jesus, with my whole heart I desire to love thee. No, my God, will I say to thee, confiding in thy mercy, my past sins do not make me fear, because I now hate and detest them above all evil, and I know that thou wilt forget the sins of those who repent and love thee. Moreover, because I have offended thee more than others, I desire, with the help which I hope for from thee, to love thee more than others. My dear Lord, thou desirest that I should be a saint, and it is my desire to become such and to please thee. I love thee, O infinite goodness. To thee do I give my whole self. Thou art my only good, my only love. Accept of me, and make me all thine own, and never suffer me to offend thee any more. Grant that I may be wholly consumed for thee, as thou wast wholly consumed for me. O Mary, the most loving and beloved spouse of the Holy Ghost, obtain for me love and fidelity.

EIGHT MEDITATIONS

FOR THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

Meditation First.

On the love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

OUR most loving Redeemer, being to leave this world to go to the Father, when he had completed by his death the work of our redemption ; and seeing that the hour of his death was near at hand, (*Jesus knowing that his hour was come, that he should pass out of this world to the Father. St. John xiii. 1.*) would not leave us orphans in this valley of tears ; and what did he then do ? He instituted the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, in which he left us his whole self. "No tongue," says St. Peter of Alcantara, "can express the greatness of the love of Jesus for our souls ; and hence this spouse, before he departed this life, in order that his absence might not be the occasion of our forgetting him, left us as a memorial this most holy Sacrament, in which he might himself remain with us, not being willing that any other pledge but himself should remain to remind us of him." Jesus, therefore, not wishing to separate himself from us by his death, instituted this Sacrament of love, in order to remain with us until the end of the world : *Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world. St. Matt. xxviii. 20.* Let us behold him, therefore, as faith teaches us, let us behold him residing upon numberless altars, shut up as in so many prisons of love, that he may be found by all who seek him. "But, O Lord," says

St. Bernard, "this does not suit with thy majesty." Jesus Christ answers: *It is sufficient that it accords with my love.*

Those persons are tenderly affected who go to Jerusalem and visit the place where the Word Incarnate was born, the hall where he was scourged, the mount on which he died, and the sepulchre in which he was buried: but how much greater ought our tenderness to be in visiting an altar on which Jesus is present in the most holy Sacrament. The Ven. John of Avila was accustomed to say, that there was no sanctuary so excellent and holy as a church in which Jesus was sacramentally present.

Affections and Prayers.

O MY beloved Jesus, O God who loveth us with such great love, what more canst thou do to make us ungrateful sinners love thee? Oh, if men loved thee, all the churches would be continually filled with devout people, prostrate on their faces, adoring and thanking thee, burning with thy love, at beholding thee with the eyes of faith hidden in a tabernacle! But, no, men forgetful of thee and of thy love, wait indeed upon a mortal man from whom they expect some perishable good, and leave thee, my Lord, abandoned and alone. Oh that I were able to make thee amends for so much ingratitude by my own services! I am grieved that I myself have hitherto been like unto such, careless and forgetful of thee. But for the future I will not be one of their number; I will wait upon thee and visit thee as often as I am able. Inflame my heart with thy holy love, that for the future I may live only to love and to please thee. Thou deservest to be loved by the hearts of all. If at one time I despised thee, I now desire to love thee. My Jesus, thou art my love and my only good: "*My God*

“ and my all.” Most holy Virgin Mary, obtain for me a great love for Jesus in the holy Sacrament.

Meditation Second.

On Jesus residing upon our altars that he may be found by all.

ST. TERESA says, that, in this world, it is impossible for all subjects to speak with their king. The most the poor can hope for, is to convey what they have to say to him by means of some third person. But to speak with thee, O King of heaven, there is no need of any third person; every one who wishes, may find thee in the Holy Sacrament, and may speak to thee without restraint. For this reason, it is, says the same Saint, that Jesus has concealed his majesty under the appearance of bread, to give us confidence, and to take away from us all fear of approaching him. Ah how does Jesus hourly exclaim from our altars: *“ Come to me all you who labour and are heavy burdened and I will refresh you.”* Come, does he say, come, ye poor, come, ye infirm, come, ye afflicted, come, ye just and sinners, and you shall find in me a remedy for all your losses and afflictions. Such is the desire of Jesus Christ to console all those who apply to him. He remains night and day upon our altars that he may be found by all, and may bestow his favours upon all. Hence the saints here in this world experienced such delight in remaining before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament that days and nights appeared to them as moments. The Countess of Feria, having become a Poor Clare, was never satisfied with remaining in the choir in sight of the tabernacle: being one day asked what she was doing so long before the Blessed Sacrament, an-

swered with surprise: "What was I doing before
" the Blessed Sacrament? what was I doing? I
" was thanking, loving and asking." St. Philip
Neri, at the sight of the Blessed Sacrament ex-
claimed: "Behold, my love, behold all my love." Ah if Jesus Christ were our whole love, our days
and nights in his presence would also appear as
moments.

Affections and Prayers.

FROM this day forward, O Jesus, I also hope to
be able to say always of thee, when visiting thee
on the altar: "Behold my love, behold all my love." Yes, my beloved Redeemer, I desire to love no
other but thee, I desire only thee, who art the only
love of my soul. I could even die of grief, when I
think that hitherto I have loved creatures and my
own gratification more than thee, by turning my
back upon thee, my sovereign good. But thou
wouldst not suffer me to be lost, thou hast borne
with me with so much patience, and, instead of
chastising me, hast wounded my heart with so
many darts of love, that I could no longer resist
thy allurements, and have now given myself to
thee. I see that thou wouldst have me all thine.
But since thou desirest this, do thou effect it, for it
is thou that must do it. Detach all my affections
from myself and from creatures, and grant that I
may seek no other but thee, nor think of any other,
nor speak of any other but thee, and that I may
desire and sigh only to burn with thy love, to live
and to die for thee. O love of my Jesus, come and
occupy my whole heart, and expel from it all love
that is not for God. I love thee, O Jesus, present
in the Holy Sacrament. I love thee, my life, my
treasure, my love, and my all. O Mary, pray for
me, and make me belong entirely to Jesus.

Meditation Third.

On the great gift of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

THE love of Jesus Christ was not satisfied with his shedding his blood and laying down his life for us in the midst of ignominies and torments, in order to evince his affection for us; but moreover, to oblige us the more to love him, on the night before his death, he would leave us his whole self to be our food in the Holy Eucharist. God is omnipotent, but, having given himself to us in this Sacrament, he has nothing more to give. The Council of Trent says, that Jesus, in giving himself to us in the holy communion, pours out upon us all the riches of his infinite love: *He pours out as it were the riches of his love towards men.* Sess. 13. cap. 2. How would a vassal esteem himself honoured, says St. Francis of Sales, to whom his prince at table should offer a portion of his own food? Jesus, in the holy communion, gives us for our food, not a portion from his own table, nor a part of his sacred flesh, but his whole body: "*Take and eat: this is my body.*" And at the same time that he gives us his body he gives us also with it his soul and divinity; so that, as St. Chrysostom says, our Lord in giving us himself in the Holy Eucharist, gives us all that he has, and nothing more remains that he can give us. O wonderful prodigy of love! God, who is the Lord of all, makes himself entirely ours.

Affections and Prayers.

O my dear Jesus, what more canst thou do to make us love thee? Oh make us sensible of the excess of thy love in reducing thyself to food, in

order to be united with us sinners. Thou then, my Redeemer, hast had so much love for me as not to refuse to give me thy whole self frequently in the holy communion, and I have many times had the baseness to expel thee from my soul ! But thou wilt not despise a contrite and humble heart. Thou didst become man for my sake; thou didst die for me, and thou hast given me thyself to be my food; and what more remains for thee to do to gain my love ? Oh that I might die with grief as often as I remember having despised thy graces ! I am sorry with my whole heart for having offended thee. I love thee, O infinite goodness ; I love thee, O infinite love. I desire nothing but to love thee, and I fear nothing but to live without loving thee. My beloved Jesus, do not refuse to come again into my soul. Come, for I would rather die a thousand deaths than drive thee from me any more ; and I will do all in my power to please thee. Come and inflame my whole soul with thy holy love. Grant that I may forget all things else to think only of thee, and to aspire after thee alone, my sovereign and only good. O Mary, my Mother, pray for me, and by your holy prayers make me grateful for the great love of Jesus towards me.

Meditation Fourth.

On the great love of Jesus Christ shown to us in the most Holy Sacrament.

JESUS knowing that his hour was come, that he should pass out of this world to the Father : having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. St. John, xiii. 1. Jesus knowing that the time of his death was near, was pleased to leave us

the strongest pledge of his love for us, and this was the gift of the Blessed Sacrament: “*He loved them to the end;*” which St. Chrysostom explains: “He loved them with extreme love.” He therefore loved men with the greatest love he could possibly entertain towards them by giving them his whole self. But when was it that Jesus instituted this great Sacrament? The night before his death: *The Lord Jesus, says the Apostle, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke, and said, Take ye and eat, this is my body.* 1 Cor. xi. 24. While men were preparing to put him to death, he was pleased to give them this last proof of his love. The marks of affection which are shown to us by our friends at the time of their death remain more deeply impressed on our hearts: and for this reason did Jesus choose to bestow upon us himself in the Blessed Sacrament, a little before his death. Well therefore might St. Thomas call this Sacrament, “The Sacrament and pledge of love;” and St. Bernard, “the love of loves;” because Jesus Christ in this Sacrament unites and comprises all the other marks of his love towards us. Hence St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, speaking of the day on which Jesus instituted this Sacrament, calls it, “the day of love.”

Affections and Prayers.

O INFINITE love of Jesus, thou art worthy of being loved with an infinite love! Thou, my Lord, hast loved man so much, and how is it that man loves thee so little! What more couldst thou do to make him love thee? O my Jesus, thou art most amiable and loving; make thyself known, make thyself loved. When shall I ever love thee, as thou hast loved me? Discover to me, more and more, the greatness of thy bounty, that I may always

burn more and more with thy love and always seek to please thee. O beloved of my soul, O that I had always loved thee! Alas, there was a time when I not only did not love thee, but even despised thy graces and thy love. I am consoled with the sorrow which I feel for having done so, and I hope for pardon through thy promise to forgive those who repent. To thee, my Saviour, do I direct all my affections; help me through the merits of thy passion to love thee with my whole strength. O that I could die for thee, as thou hast died for me! Holy Mary, Mother of God, obtain for me the grace of loving henceforward God alone.

Meditation Fifth.

On the union of the soul with Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

ST. DIONYSIUS says, that the principal effect of love is a tendency to union. For this end did Jesus institute the holy Communion to unite himself entirely with our souls. He had given himself to us as our teacher, our model and victim; it remained for him to give himself to us as our food, to become one with us, as food becomes the same with the person who eats it; and this he did by instituting the Holy Sacrament of love. "The last "degree of his love," says St. Bernardin of Sienna, "was his giving himself to us to be our food; be- "cause he gave himself to be completely united "with us, as food is united with him who takes "it" Thus Jesus Christ was not satisfied with uniting himself to our human nature, he was desirous by this Sacrament to devise a means of uniting himself to each one of us individually, so

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as to become wholly his who should receive him. Hence St. Francis of Sales says: "In no one action " can our Blessed Saviour be considered more tender " or more loving than in this, in which, he, as it " were, annihilates himself, and reduces himself to " food to penetrate our hearts and to unite himself " to the hearts of all the faithful." Because Jesus Christ ardently loved us, he was desirous of being united with us in the Holy Eucharist, that we might become the same thing with him; thus speaks St. Chrysostom: "He intermixed himself " with us, that he might become one with us; for " this belongs to ardent affection." Thou wast desirous, O God of love, that our hearts and thine should form but one heart, says St. Laurence Justinian. And Jesus himself said this when he said: *He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him.* St. John vi. 57. He therefore who communicates, abides in Jesus, and Jesus abides in him; and this union is not a mere union of affections, but a true and real union. As two pieces of wax, says St. Cyril of Alexandria, are melted together, and united together, so he who communicates and Jesus Christ whom he receives become but one and the same thing. Let us therefore imagine, when we communicate, that Jesus Christ says to us as he did to his beloved servant Margaret of Ypres: "Behold, daughter, the de-lightful union that exists between us; love me, " and we will consider ourselves as united for ever, " and will never separate."

Affections and Prayers.

O MY Jesus, this is what I desire and seek for from thee in the Holy Communion, to hear from thee: "We will consider ourselves as united for ever, and will never separate." I know that thou

wilt not separate thyself from me, if I do not first separate myself from thee. But this is my fear: lest I should ever again separate myself from thee as I have done before. Permit it not, my beloved Redeemer. "Suffer me not to be separated from "thee." I must be in danger of this until my death: through the merits of thy death I beseech thee that I may die rather than repeat so grievous an injury against thee. I repeat, and give me grace ever to repeat: "Suffer me not to be separated from thee; "suffer me not to be separated from thee." O God of my soul, I love thee, I love thee, and desire always to love thee, and to love only thee. I protest before heaven and earth that I desire nothing but thee. O my Jesus, hear me; I desire only thee. O Mary, mother of mercy, pray for me, and obtain for me never to separate myself from Jesus, and to love only Jesus.

Meditation Sixth.

On the desire of Jesus Christ to be united with us in the Holy Communion.

JESUS knowing that his hour was come. St. John xiii. 1. This hour which Jesus called *his hour*, was the hour of that night on which he was to begin his passion. But why did he call so dreadful an hour, *his hour*? Because this was the hour for which he had sighed during his whole life; because he had resolved to bequeath to us in this hour the Holy Communion, by which he desired to become united with us whom he loved, and for whom he was soon to shed his blood and lay down his life. Hear how he spoke on that night to his disciples: "*With desire have I desired to eat this pasch with*

“ *you* :” by which words he would signify to us his great wish and anxiety to unite himself with us in the Holy Sacrament of love. “ *With desire have I desired* :” “ This,” says St. Laurence Justinian, “ is the voice of most ardent charity.” Now the same love which then burnt in the heart of Jesus, burns there still ; and he gives the same invitation to all which he gave to his disciples to receive him : *Take ye and eat : this is my body.* St. Matt. xxv. And to allure us to receive him with affection and love, he promises heaven to us : *If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.* St. John vi. 52. And if we refuse to receive him, he threatens us with death : *Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.* St. John vi. 54. These invitations, promises and threats, all arise from the desire of Jesus Christ to be united with us in the Holy Communion through his love for us. Jesus, because he loves us, desires that we should love him ; and because he desires us, he would have us desire him : “ God thirsts to “ be thirsted after,” says St. Gregory. Happy the soul that approaches the Holy Communion with a great desire of being united to Jesus Christ.

Affections and Prayers.

My adorable Jesus, thou canst give no greater proof of love, to teach us how much thou lovest us. Thou hast given thy life for us ; thou hast bequeathed thyself to us in the Holy Sacrament, that we may nourish ourselves with thy sacred flesh, and thou art most desirous that we should receive thee. How can we be sensible of all these efforts of thy love, and not burn with the love of thee ? Begone, all earthly affections from my heart ; it is you that hinder me from burning with love for Jesus, as he burns with love for me. And what other pledges

of thy love can I expect, O my Redeemer, than those which thou hast already given me? Thou hast sacrificed thy whole life for the love of me; thou hast embraced for my sake the most bitter and ignominious death; thou hast reduced thyself for me almost to annihilation, by becoming my food in the Holy Eucharist, in order to give me thy whole self. Ah Lord, grant that I may never more live ungrateful for such great goodness. I thank thee for having allowed me time to bewail my past offences against thee, and to love thee during the remainder of my days. I am sorry, O my sovereign good, for having hitherto so much despised thy love. I love thee, O infinite goodness. I love thee, O infinite treasure. I love thee, O infinite love, who art worthy to be loved with an infinite love. Help me, O Jesus, to discard from my heart all affections which tend not to thee, that from this day forward, I may neither desire, nor seek, nor love any other but thee. My beloved Lord, grant that I may ever find thee, grant that I may ever love thee. Take thou possession of my whole will; in order that I may never desire any thing but what is pleasing to thee. My God; my God, whom shall I love, if I love not thee, who art all goodness! O Mary, my Mother, take me under your protection, and obtain for me the purest love for Jesus.

Meditation Seventh.

On the Holy Communion as the means of obtaining perseverance in divine grace.

WHEN Jesus comes to the soul in the Holy Communion, he brings with him every good, every

grace, and especially the grace of holy perseverance. The principal effect of the Holy Sacrament of the altar, is to nourish the soul that receives it with the bread of life, by imparting great strength to advance towards perfection, and to resist those enemies who seek to effect its eternal ruin. Hence Jesus Christ calls himself in this Sacrament heavenly bread: *I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever.* St. John vi. 51, 52. As earthly bread maintains the life of the body, so this heavenly bread maintains the life of the soul by enabling it to persevere in the state of God's grace. Hence the Council of Trent teaches (Sess. 13, cap. 2.) that the Holy Communion is "a medicine which frees "us from venial sins and preserves us from mortal "ones." Innocent III. writes, that Jesus Christ delivers us by his passion from sins committed, and by the Holy Eucharist from those which we might otherwise commit. Hence St. Bonaventure says, that sinners should not stay away from the Holy Communion, because they have been sinners; but for this very reason should receive it more frequently; for the more infirm a person is, the more does he stand in need of a physician.

Affections and Prayers.

How miserable am I, O Lord, in bewailing my weakness in falling so often while I stay away from thee! How can I resist my internal enemies without thee, who art my strength? Had I approached to thee more frequently in the Holy Communion, I should not have been so frequently overcome by my enemies. For the future it shall not be so: "*In thee, O Lord, will I hope, let me not be confounded for ever.*" No, I will no more rely on my own purposes, but will place my whole confidence

in thee, my Jesus, who wilt give me strength to fall no more into sin. I am weak, but thou by the Holy Communion wilt make me strong against all temptations: "*I can do all things in him who "strengtheneth me.*" Pardon me, O Jesus, all the injuries I have committed against thee, for which I am sorry with my whole soul; I am resolved rather to die than wilfully offend thee any more; and I trust in thy passion that thou wilt give me thy help to persevere in thy grace to the end of my life. "*In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never "be confounded.*" And, with St. Bonaventure, I will say the same to you, O Mary, my Mother: "*In you, that is, in your holy intercession, O "Blessed Lady, have I hoped, let me never be "confounded.*"

Meditation Eighth.

On preparation before and thanksgiving after receiving the Holy Communion.

CARDINAL Bona asks: "How does it happen "that so many souls after so many Communions "make so little advancement in the way of God?" And he answers: "The fault is not in the food but "in those who receive it." There is nothing wanting in the Holy Communion, but preparation is wanting in those who receive it. The fire immediately burns dry wood, but not wood that is green, because being green it is not in a state for burning. The saints derived great advantage from the Holy Communion, because they were most careful in preparing themselves for it. There are two things which we should endeavour to acquire in preparing ourselves for Communion. The first is detach-

ment from creatures, by banishing from our hearts everything that is not of God and for God. When our hearts are taken up with worldly affections, the more there is of earth in them, the less room will there be for divine love. One day St. Gertrude asked our Lord what preparation he required of her for the Holy Communion; and Jesus answered: "I require no other of thee, but that thou come "to receive me devoid of thyself." The second thing we should endeavour to acquire, in order to be prepared to reap great fruit from the Holy Communion, is a desire to receive Jesus Christ with a view to love him much more for the future. Germon says that at this table those only are filled who feel great hunger. Hence St. Francis of Sales writes, that the principal intention of the soul in communicating should be to advance in the love of God. "He," says the Saint, "should be received "for love, who for love alone gives himself to us." And on this account our Lord once said to St. Matilda: "When thou art about to communicate, "desire all the love that any soul has ever had "towards me, and I will receive thy love as though "it were what thou wouldest have it to be."

Thanksgiving after Communion is also necessary. No prayers are so acceptable to God as those which we offer to him after Communion. During this time we should employ ourselves in affections and prayers. The holy affections in which we then exercise ourselves, have greater merit before God, than those which we offer to him at other times, because they come before him inflamed with the presence of Jesus Christ, who has united himself with our souls. And as to prayers, St. Teresa says that Jesus Christ after Communion remains in the soul as on the throne of grace, and says to her: "*What wilt thou, that I should do for thee?*" I am come down from heaven to bestow my graces upon

thee: ask of me what thou wilt, and as much as thou wilt, and thou shalt be heard. Oh what treasures of grace are lost by those who offer but few prayers to God after Communion!

Affections and Prayers.

O god of love, dost thou so much desire to dispense thy graces to us, and are we careless in seeking for them? How great will be our distress when we come to die, to think of this neglect so pernicious to us! Forget, O Lord, what is past; for the future with thy holy assistance I will prepare myself in a better manner, by being careful to take off my affections from everything that can hinder me from receiving all those graces which thou desirest to impart to me. And, after Communion, I will endeavour as far as I am able, to obtain thy help to advance in thy love. Do thou give me grace to do this. O my Jesus, how careless have I hitherto been in loving thee! The time of life which in thy mercy thou dost allot me, is the time to prepare myself for death, and to make amends for the offences I have committed against thee. I desire to spend it all in bewailing my sins and in loving thee. I love thee, O Jesus, my love, I love thee, my only good; have pity on me and do not abandon me. And O Blessed Virgin Mary, never cease to succour me with your holy intercession.

On the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin.

July 2.

I. MARY set out from Nazareth to go to the city of Hebron, distant seventy miles, that is, at least seven days journey, over rugged mountains, and without any other companion but her spouse Joseph. The holy Virgin made haste, as the Evangelist records: *Mary went into the hill country with haste.* St. Luke i. 39. Tell us, O Blessed Lady, why you undertake so long and painful a journey, and why you are in such haste on your way? I am going, she replies, to do my office of exercising charity, I am going to console a family. If then, O holy Mother of God, your office is to console us, and to dispense favours to our souls, Oh come and visit and console my poor soul. Your visit sanctified the house of Elizabeth; come, O Mary, and sanctify me also.

II. The Holy Virgin arrived at the house of Elizabeth. She was already become Mother of God, but she was the first to salute her relation: "*She entered and saluted Elizabeth.*" Elizabeth, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, knew that the divine Word was already made flesh in the womb of Mary; and hence she called her blessed amongst women, and the fruit of her womb blessed also: "*Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*" And full of holy confusion and joy she at the same time exclaimed: "*Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*" But what did the humble Mary answer to such words? she answered: "*My soul doth magnify the Lord.*" As though she had said: Elizabeth, thou praisest me, but I praise my God, for having exalted me to the dignity of becoming

his mother: "*He hath regarded the humility of his handmaid.*" O most holy Mary, since you dispense so many favours to those who ask for them, I beseech you to impart to me your profound humility. You esteem yourself as nothing before God; but I am worse than nothing, for I am nothing and a sinner. You can make me humble. Make me such by your holy intercession, for the love of that God who made you his Mother.

III. But what took place at the first sound of Mary's voice, when she saluted Elizabeth? *When Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.* St. Luke i. 41. The infant John leaped for joy on account of the divine grace with which he was sanctified before his birth; Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and Zachary the father of the Baptist was a little while after consoled with the recovery of his speech. So that it is unquestionably true, O my Queen and Mother, that through you are dispensed the graces of God, and souls are made holy. Never, O most blessed Lady, be unmindful of me your poor servant, who loves you and relies so much upon you. Your prayers are all heard by Almighty God who loves you so much. Holy Mary, pray to him for me, and make me holy.

On the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin.

August 15.

I. MARY dies; but how does she die? she dies completely detached from all affection to creatures, and consumed with that divine love, with which her most holy soul was always inflamed during her

whole life. O holy Mother, you now leave the earth; forget not us poor pilgrims, who remain in this valley of tears surrounded and assailed by so many enemies, who are ever seeking to accomplish our eternal perdition. Oh! through the merits of your precious death, obtain for us detachment from all earthly things, the pardon of our sins, the love of God, and holy perseverance; and when the hour of our death arrives, assist us from heaven with your holy prayers, and obtain for us to come and embrace your feet in paradise.

II. Mary dies; and her most pure body having been conducted and laid by the Apostles in a sepulchre, and guarded for three days by angels, is transported into heaven; but her beautiful soul enters immediately after her death into that blessed kingdom, accompanied by innumerable angels and conducted by her beloved Son. Being entered into heaven she humbly presents herself before God, adores him, and with the greatest love and gratitude thanks him for the many graces he has conferred upon her. God embraces her, blesses her, and appoints her to be Queen of the universe, and exalts her above all the saints and angels: "The holy Mother of God is exalted above the "choirs of angels to celestial kingdoms." Now if the human mind, as the Apostle says, cannot comprehend the immense glory which God prepares in heaven for those his servants who love him here on earth, what must have been the glory which he bestowed on his most holy Mother, who loved him, here upon the earth, more than all the saints and angels, and loved him with all her powers, to that degree that Mary alone, when entered into heaven, could say to God: if I have not loved thee on earth as much as thou deservest to be loved, at least I have loved thee as much as I was able.

III. Let us congratulate Mary on the glory with

which God has enriched her. And let us congratulate ourselves; for while Mary is appointed Queen of the universe, she is also appointed our advocate. She is an advocate so full of pity, as to undertake to defend all criminals who recommend themselves to her; and is so powerful with our Judge as to gain all the causes which she undertakes to defend. O Queen and advocate of sinners, in your hands is our welfare. If you pray for us, we shall be secure. Say to your divine Son that you desire us to be with you in paradise. He denies you nothing that you ask of him. Our life, our sweetness, and our hope, Mary, pray to Jesus for us.

On the Nativit y of the Blessed Virgin.

September 8.

I. BEFORE the birth of Mary, the world was buried in the darkness of the night of sin: "but at the birth of Mary," says a holy Father, "the morning arose." Of Mary is it said in the Canticles: *Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising?* vi. 9. As when morning breaks, the earth rejoices, because morning is the harbinger of the rising of the sun; so when Mary was born, the whole world rejoiced, because she was the harbinger of the rising of the Sun of justice, Jesus Christ, who was to become her son in order to save us by his death; hence the Church sings: "Thy nativity, "O Virgin Mother of God, announced joy to the "whole world: for from thee arose the sun of justice, who gave us life everlasting." So that when Mary was born, our remedy was near at hand, our consolation, and our salvation; for through Mary was to come to us the Saviour of the world.

II. This Virgin being destined to become the Mother of the Eternal Word, God enriched her with such abundant graces that from the time of her immaculate conception she surpassed in sanctity all the saints and angels; having received grace of a superior order, such as corresponded with the dignity of Mother of God. O holy infant, O full of grace, I a miserable sinner salute you. You are the beloved, the delight of God, have pity therefore on me, who by my sins am the hatred and abomination of God. You, O most pure Virgin, even from your infancy, so gained the heart of God that he now denies you nothing, and grants all that you ask of him. In you therefore are my hopes. Recommend me to your Son, and I shall be secure.

III. At the time that Mary was destined to be the Mother of our Redeemer, she was also destined to become a mediatrix of intercession between God and us sinners. Hence St. Thomas Aquinas says that Mary received as many graces as were sufficient to save all men; and hence St. Bernard calls Mary a full aqueduct, of whose fulness all may participate. O Queen, O Mediatrix of sinners, fulfil your office, and intercede for me. I will not let my sins hinder me from placing my confidence in you, O holy Mother of God; no, I will confide in you, and my confidence shall be so great, that if my salvation were in my own hands, I would place it entirely in yours. O Mary, take me under your protection, this is all I desire and ask.

On St. Michael.

September 29.

I. AMONG the angels in heaven none surpasses St. Michael in glory; and according to St. Basil and others, there is none that equals him: and with good reason, because St. Michael was chosen to subdue the pride of Lucifer and of all the rebel angels, and to expel them from heaven. Christian, if thou lovest this archangel, who has such great love for men, rejoice at the glory which he enjoys in heaven; and beseech him, that, as he is the protector of the whole Church and of all the faithful, he will be thy special protector with God, who loves him so much, and who rejoices in beholding one who is so faithful to him and so zealous for his honour, so much glorified by all.

II. In the Mass for the dead, the Church prays: "Let the standard bearer, St. Michael, bring them "into the holy light." The learned explain this prayer, and say that St. Michael has the honourable office of presenting to Jesus Christ the Judge, all the souls that depart out of this world in the grace of God. Protect me, therefore, O holy archangel, and by your protection enable my soul to become worthy of being presented by your hands on the day of my death, ornamented with divine grace, before my Judge Jesus Christ.

III. Again, the Holy Church prays to St. Michael in the name of all the faithful, to defend us from the assaults of the wicked enemy at the hour of our death, that we may not be conquered and lose our souls: "Holy St. Michael, the archangel, "defend us in battle, that we may not be lost at "the dreadful judgment." O holy archangel, the devil has many weapons to employ against me at

the hour of my death ; these weapons are my sins, by which he will then endeavour to throw me into despair ; he is also preparing furious assaults of temptations to cause me then to fall again into sin. You, who conquered him and expelled him from heaven, conquer him again for me, and drive him far away from me at the hour of my death ; I beseech you to grant this my prayer for the love of that God who so much loves you, and whom you so much love. O Mary, Queen of heaven, procure for me the assistance of St. Michael at the hour of my death.

On our Guardian Angels.

October 2.

I. ST. BERNARD says, there are three ways by which we ought to honour our guardian angels : " by reverence, by devotion, and by confidence." *By reverence*; because these holy spirits and princes of heaven are always present with us, and assist us in all our actions. And on this account, out of regard to our guardian angels, we ought carefully to refrain from every action which can displease them. St. Frances Widow of Rome, saw that the angel who attended her in a human form, every time that he observed any improper action or word in any one in conversation, covered his face with his hands. O my holy guardian angel, how many times have I by my sins obliged you to cover your face ! I ask your forgiveness, and I beseech you to implore forgiveness for me from God, for I am resolved to offend neither God nor you any more by my negligences.

II. In the second place, we ought to honour our

good angels by *devotion* to them, on account of the respect which they deserve, and the love which they have for us. No love of father, brother or friend, can equal the love which our good angels have for each one of us. Our worldly friends often love us from motives of interest, and on this account very easily forget us when we are in adversity, and much more when we offend them. Our angel guardians love us solely from motives of charity, and hence when we are in difficulties they assist us more particularly, and cease not to help us after we have rebelled against God. Then will they endeavour to enlighten us, in order that we may soon return to God by repentance. O how much do I thank you, my holy guardian, for the lights which you have communicated to me. Oh that I had always obeyed you ! Continue to enlighten me, rebuke me when I fail, and do not forsake me unto the last moment of my life.

III. In the third place, we ought to have great *confidence* in the assistance of our good angels. God's love for us was not satisfied with giving us his Son Jesus for our Redeemer, and Mary for our advocate; he has been pleased to give us also his angels to be our guardians, and has commanded them to assist us during the course of our lives: *He hath given his angels charge over thee: to keep thee in all thy ways.* Ps. xc. 11. O God of infinite mercy, what more canst thou do for me that I may be saved ? I thank thee, O my Lord ; and I thank you also, O prince of paradise, my good angel, who for so many years have assisted and protected me. I have been unmindful of you, but you have not forgotten me. Who knows how much farther I may have to go before I enter eternity ? O my good angel, guide me in the way to heaven, and cease not to assist me, until you behold me become your eternal companion in the kingdom of heaven.

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On St. Teresa.

October 16.

I. LET us consider the love which this seraphic Saint had for Almighty God. It seemed to her impossible that there should be any one in the world who did not love God. She said: "O my "God, art thou not most amiable on account of thy "infinite perfections and of thy infinite love for us? "How can it be possible that any one should be "found that does not love thee?" She was most humble, but speaking of love, she did not hesitate to say: "I am all perfection, except in desires and "in love." The Saint gives us this injunction: "Detach the heart from all things, and seek God, "and thou wilt find him." She said, that to him who loves God, it is easy to become disengaged from the earth: "O my God, nothing more is necessary than to love thee truly, in order to find "all things else easy." And she writes in another place: "Since we have to live, let us live for thee, "and may our own interests cease. What more or "greater can we obtain than to please thee? O "my happiness, my God, what shall I do to please "thee?" She even said that, when she went to heaven, she should not be concerned to see others enjoy God more than she did, but should not be able to endure to see others love him more than she loved him herself.

II. What is so admirable in this Saint is the resolute spirit with which she endeavoured to do every thing which she knew to be pleasing to God: "There is nothing," said she, "however great it "may be, which if it should occur to me, that I "would not courageously meet." And hence she taught: "That the love of God is acquired by being

“ resolute in acting and suffering for God.” And agreeably with this, she says in another place: “ The devil has no fear of irresolute souls.” So ardent was her desire to please God, that she made a vow to do in all things what was most perfect. And because love is best evinced in suffering for the object loved, she desired to live only to suffer for God; hence she writes: “ It does not appear to me that we need live.....unless it be to suffer; “ and this, with great affection, do I ask for of God. “ I say to him with my whole heart: Lord, either “ to suffer, or to die; nothing else do I ask for.” Her love arrived at such a high degree that Jesus Christ once said to her: “ Teresa, thou art all mine, “ and I am all thine.”

III. She was so dear to her heavenly spouse, that Jesus sent a seraph to pierce her heart with a dart of fire. Finally, as she had lived, so did she die, inflamed with love. When her end was approaching, all her desires were to die in order to be united with God: “ O death,” did she say, “ I know not “ how to fear thee, for in thee is life. My soul, “ serve thy God, and I hope that he will apply a “ remedy to thy suffering.” Hence she repeated this tender sentiment: “ I live without living in “ myself; and I hope for so much life, that I may “ die, because I do not die.” When the Holy Viaticum was brought to her, she said: “ O my Lord, “ now is arrived the long-wished-for hour, the time “ is come when we shall see each other face to face.” She died of pure love, as she revealed after her death. O holy and seraphic Saint, now that you enjoy the God whom you so much loved during life, have pity on us, who are still on the earth and in such great danger of losing him. Obtain for us by your holy prayers to come with you to love our God for ever in heaven.

On the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin.

November 21.

I. THE holy infant Mary, at the age of three years, besought her saintly parents that she might be consigned to the temple, according to their promise. The day being come which had been fixed upon, the young and immaculate Virgin leaves Nazareth, in company with St. Joachim and St. Ann, and attended by numerous angels watching over her as being destined to become the Mother of their Creator: "Go," says St. Germanus, "go "Blessed Virgin to the house of the Lord, and wait "in expectation of the Holy Ghost, who is to come "and make thee the mother of the Word eternal."

II. The holy company having reached Jerusalem proceed to the temple, where the blessed child turning to her parents, kneels down, and kissing their hands, asks their blessing; then rising ascends, without looking back, the steps of the temple: and, taking leave completely of the world, and of all that the world could bestow, she offers and consecrates herself entirely to God. The life of Mary in the temple, was from this period nothing but a continual exercise of love and of oblation of her whole self to the Lord, increasing from hour to hour, and even every moment, in virtue, being strengthened by divine grace, and endeavouring herself with all her powers to correspond with the grace bestowed upon her. Mary, in a revelation to the holy virgin St. Elizabeth, says: "Thinkest "thou that I acquired grace and virtue without any "labour? Know that I received no grace from "God without great labour, continual prayer, ardent desires, tears and penances."

III. So that in the temple the youthful virgin

Mary did nothing but weep. Seeing mankind lost and suffering under the anger of God, she prayed chiefly for the coming of the Messias, desiring to become the servant of the happy virgin who should be the mother of God. Oh, who might not then have said: O blessed Lady, know that through your prayers the Son of God is hastening to come to redeem the world; and know that you are the blessed one, chosen to become the Mother of your Creator. O beloved of God, most holy child, you pray for all, pray also for me. You consecrated yourself from your very infancy to the love of your God; do you therefore obtain for me that at least I may devote the remainder of my days to his service, and live only for him. This day do I renounce with you all creatures, and consecrate myself to the love of our Lord. I offer myself to you also, O Queen, to be always your servant. Accept of me for your special servant, and obtain for me the grace of being faithful to you and to your Son, that I may at length come to praise and love you for ever in heaven.

On the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin.

December 8.

I. IT was most agreeable to the three divine Persons to preserve Mary from original sin: it was agreeable to the Father for Mary to be his first begotten daughter. As Jesus was the first begotten of God: *the first-born of every creature.* *Coloss.* i. 15.; so Mary, being destined to be the Mother of Jesus, was always considered as the first begotten adopted daughter of God, and hence was always

filled with his grace: *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways.* *Prov. viii. 22.* For the honour therefore of the Son, it was fitting that the Father should preserve the Mother from all stain of sin. It was congruous also, because he had destined this his daughter to crush the head of the infernal serpent, who had seduced man, as it is said: *She shall crush thy head.* *Gen. iii. 15.* Hence, how could he permit her to have first been the slave of the devil? Again, Mary was destined to be the advocate of sinners; and on this account also it was worthy of God to preserve her from sin, in order that she might not appear stained with the same guilt as men, for whom she was to intercede.

II. It was agreeable to the Son that his Mother should be immaculate. He himself chose her to be his Mother. It never can be believed that a Son, having it in his power to select a Queen for his Mother, would choose a slave. And how can it be conceived that the Word Eternal, having it in his power to have for his Mother an immaculate Virgin ever beloved of God, would allow her to be defiled with sin, and for a time displeasing to God? Moreover St. Augustin says: "The flesh of Christ "is the flesh of Mary." The Son of God would have abhorred to take flesh of a St. Agnes, a St. Gertrude, or a St. Teresa, because these holy virgins were before baptism stained with original sin; because the devil might then have reproached him with having the same flesh which for a time had been under his dominion. But he did not abhor the virgin womb of Mary, because she was ever spotless and pure. Besides, St. Thomas says, that Mary was preserved from all actual sin, even venial, because, otherwise she would not have been a fit Mother for God: and how much more unfit would she have been, had she been stained with original sin, which makes the soul odious to God?

III. It was worthy of the Holy Ghost that his most beloved spouse should be immaculate. As the redemption of man from sin was to be accomplished, he was pleased that his spouse should be redeemed, by being preserved from falling into sin. And if God preserved the body of Mary after her death from earthly corruption, how much more should we believe that he preserved her soul from sinful defilement? Hence the divine Spouse calls her, "*a garden enclosed and a fountain sealed up*," because the enemies of the soul never entered the soul of the Blessed Mary. The divine Spouse on this account praises her, saying: *Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is no spot in thee. Cant. iv. 7.* O most beautiful Virgin, I rejoice at beholding you so dear to God, on account of your purity and spotless beauty. I thank God for having preserved you from all sin. O holy Queen, since you are so beloved by the whole Blessed Trinity, disdain not to cast your eyes of compassion upon my poor soul which is so defiled and loaded with sin, and to obtain for me pardon from God and eternal salvation. Look upon me, and change me. By your sweetness you have attracted so many souls to love you, draw also my heart to you, in order that from this day forward I may love no others but God and you. I place my confidence in your holy intercession; most dear Mother, do not abandon me. Ever assist me with your powerful prayers both in life and particularly at the hour of my death; let me die invoking and loving you, that I may come to love you for ever in heaven.

THE WAY OF SALVATION.

PART III.

RULES OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE.

The first Chapter treats of the means of continuing in the grace of God; the second contains acts of the pious practices to be observed; and the third explains the practice of the principal Christian virtues.

Chapter First.

On the means of continuing in the grace of God.

IT is necessary to be fully convinced that, in order to obtain salvation, we must not only desire to be saved, but also adopt the means of being saved left us by Jesus Christ. If we fall into sin, it will be of no avail for us to attempt an excuse at the day of judgment, by saying that our temptations were very strong and ourselves very weak: because God gives us the means of overcoming by his grace all the assaults of our enemies; if, therefore, we will not avail ourselves of them and are overcome, the fault is our own. All persons desire to be saved, but the greater part, because they will not adopt the means of being saved, fall into sins and are lost.

The *first* means is to avoid and fly from the occasions of sin. He who is not careful to avoid and fly from the occasions of sin, particularly such as allure him to sensual gratifications, cannot possibly avoid falling into sin. St. Philip Neri said: "In the war of the senses, those cowards who fly "become the conquerors." The occasion, when not fled from, becomes as a bandage bound over our eyes, which will not allow us to see anything, neither God, nor hell, nor our former good resolutions. The scripture tells us that it is impossible to walk upon burning coals and not be burnt: *Can a man walk upon hot coals and his feet not be burnt?* Prov. vi. 28. In like manner it is morally impossible to expose ourselves voluntarily to the danger of alluring occasions and not fall, although we may have made a thousand resolutions and a thousand promises to God. The truth of this is proved by the misfortune of so many poor souls who are daily carried headlong into vice, because they will not fly from dangerous occasions. And he who is addicted to any habit of impurity, let him know that to restrain himself, it will not be sufficient to avoid merely the immediate occasions of temptations; if he will not avoid those also which are not altogether immediate occasions he will be very easily overcome and will fall. Let us not suffer ourselves to be deceived by the devil, who tells us that we are safe, because the person who is the subject of temptation to us is holy; it often happens that, the more devout such a person is, the more violent is the temptation. St. Thomas of Aquinas says that the most holy persons have the greatest attractions. The temptation begins in the spirit and ends in the flesh. A great servant of God, Father Sertorius Caputo of the Society of Jesus, observes that the devil first endeavours to induce us to love virtue in certain pious persons, and then to love the persons

themselves, when he blinds us and hurries us into sin. It is necessary also to avoid wicked companions: we are very weak, the devil is continually tempting us, and the senses alluring us to evil, yet the influence of one wicked companion will more easily overcome us than all these. The first thing therefore that we must do to be saved, is to keep ourselves at a distance from dangerous occasions and wicked companions. And in this it is necessary to use violence with ourselves, and overcome all human respect. He who does not use violence with himself, will not be saved. It is true we are not to confide in our own strength, but only in the divine assistance; but God requires of us on our part to do violence to ourselves in order to obtain heaven. *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.* St Matt. xi. 12.

The second means is mental prayer. Without this it will be difficult for the soul to continue long in the grace of God. *In all thy works, says the Holy Spirit, remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin.* Eccl. vii. 40. He who frequently meditates on his last end, upon death, judgment, hell and heaven, will not fall into sin: but these truths are not to be discerned by the eyes, but only by the mind; if they be not dwelt upon, they vanish from the mind; and the pleasures of sense presenting themselves, easily gain admittance into the hearts of those who do not keep in mind the eternal truths; and hence it is that so many abandon themselves to vice and are lost. All Christians know and believe that they must die, and must be judged after death; but because they do not think of these things, they live at a distance from God. Without mental prayer we can have no light, but must walk in the dark, and walking in the dark we cannot perceive dangers, we cannot take precautions; we ask not God for his assistance, and thus

we must be lost. Without prayer there is neither light nor strength for us to walk forward in the way of God ; because without prayer we ask not God to give us his help ; and hence not praying we must certainly fall. Hence Cardinal Bellarmin says that it is morally impossible for a Christian who does not meditate upon eternal truths to continue in the grace of God. On the contrary, he who meditates every day, will not easily fall into sin ; and if by some misfortune he should fall, he will, by a continuance in prayer, soon arise and return again to God. A servant of God once said : " Mental prayer and mortal sin can never exist "together." Resolve, therefore, to make every day, either in the morning or in the evening, but better in the morning, half an hour's meditation. Refer to Sect. II. of the following chapter, and you will there find briefly explained the method of performing this kind of prayer. For the rest, it is sufficient to read during the half hour some book of meditations, either this or one of the many others, and excite within you from time to time some pious affection, and make some prayer to God. Above all I beseech you never to relinquish this kind of prayer, but to make it at least once in the day, although you should be in great dryness of spirit, and should find it very irksome. If you continue faithful to it, you will assuredly be saved.

Together with prayer it is of great use to be diligent in spiritual reading, out of some book that treats of the holy lives of the saints, or of the christian virtues ; and this for half an hour or at least a quarter of an hour every day. How many by reading some devout book have changed their lives and become saints ! St. John Colombinus, St. Ignatius, and so many others. It would also be very useful every year to make a retreat in some

religious house. But at least never fail to make your meditation every morning.

The *third* means is the frequenting of the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Communion. By confession the soul is kept purified, and by it not only are our faults forgiven us, but additional helps are obtained for us for resisting temptations. And for this end you have your director; always confess to him and not to another, and consult him on all affairs of importance, even though they be of a temporal nature; and obey him in everything, particularly if you are troubled with scruples. He who obeys his director never need be afraid of doing wrong. *He who hears you, hears me.* St. Luke, x. 16. The voice of your director is the voice of God.

The Holy Communion is called heavenly bread; because as earthly bread maintains the life of the body, so does the Holy Communion maintain the life of the soul: *Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man you shall not have life in you.* St. John, vi. 54. On the contrary, to him who frequently eats of this bread, is promised eternal life: *If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever.* Ibid. 52. Hence the Council of Trent (Sess. 13, c. 2.) calls the Holy Communion a "Medicine which frees "us from venial sins and preserves us from mortal "ones." Resolve, therefore, to communicate at least every eight days, with a determination not to allow any worldly affair to prevent you from so doing; there is no affair of greater importance than eternal salvation. Besides, the more you are in the world, the greater need have you of spiritual help, because you are exposed to greater temptations. How to make a good confession and communion, is explained in Sect. III. of the following chapter, where you will find acts to be used

before and after confession and communion, for preparation and thanksgiving.

The *fourth* means is to hear Mass every morning. When we assist at Mass, we give more honour to God than all the angels and saints in heaven give him, because their honour is only that of creatures: but in the Mass we offer to God Jesus Christ, who gives him infinite honour. Read Sect. IV. of the following chapter, where you will find a method of hearing Mass with great profit.

The *fifth* means is to visit the Blessed Sacrament every day, Jesus Christ remains upon so many altars in so many churches to bestow favours upon all those who come to visit him; and hence those who practise this beautiful devotion derive innumerable benefits from it. In Sect. V. of the next chapter you will find a prayer to be said when visiting the Blessed Sacrament. The graces which you should particularly seek for in your visits, are the love of God and holy perseverance to the end of your life.

The *sixth* means, which above all others I recommend you to practise, is holy prayer. It is certain that we cannot, without the help of God, do the least good for our souls: and God declares he will not bestow on us his help unless we ask him for it: *Ask, and it shall be given to you. St. Matt. vii. 7.* Hence St. Teresa says: "he who asks not, "receives not." Hence also that common sentence of the holy Fathers and divines with St. Thomas, that "without prayer it is impossible to persevere "in the grace of God and to be saved." But he who prays is secure of God's assistance; we have his word for it, which cannot fail, and repeated many times in the Sacred Gospels: *All things, whatsoever you ask, when ye pray, believe that you shall receive; and they shall come unto you. St. Mark xi. 24. Every one that asketh, receiveth. St. Luke*

xi. 10. *Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it you.* St. John xvi. 23. God grants whatever is asked for in the name of Jesus Christ. If then we would be saved, we must pray, and this too with humility, confidence, and above all with perseverance. And hence it is that meditation is of so much use; because by it we are reminded to pray; we should otherwise forget it, and thus should be lost. St. Teresa writes, that through the desire which she had that all might be saved, she could have wished to ascend a high mountain, and thence to make herself heard by all men, saying only this word: "Pray, pray." The ancient fathers of the desert, in their conferences, concluded that there was no better way of obtaining salvation than to repeat continually that prayer of David: "*Incline unto my aid, O God; O Lord make haste to help me.*" Let us endeavour to do this. Or let us repeat that beautiful ejaculation of the Venerable Father Leonardo da Porto Maurigio: "O my Jesus, mercy!" The two principal graces we should always seek for (as I have said above) are the love of God and holy perseverance. And these graces we should ask for through the intercession of the most holy Mary, who is called the dispenser of all the divine graces; and when we pray to her she will obtain them for us from God. Hence St. Bernard exhorts all: "Let us seek grace, and let us seek it through "Mary; because what she seeks she finds, and "cannot be refused."

Chapter Second.

ACTS OF PIOUS PRACTICES TO BE OBSERVED.

SECT. I.—*Acts on rising in the morning.*

MAKE the sign of the cross and say : 1. "O my God, I adore thee and give thee thanks for all thy benefits, and especially for having preserved me during the night which is just past. 2. I love thee with my whole heart, and I offer to thee whatever I shall do or suffer in the course of this day, in union with the sufferings of Jesus and of Mary, and with an intention of gaining all the indulgences I am able. 3. I will endeavour to avoid all kinds of sin, and I beseech thee for the love of Jesus to grant me perseverance. I will endeavour, particularly in such things as shall be contrary to my inclinations, to unite myself to thy blessed will, saying : Lord, thy will be done. O Jesus, extend thy hands over me this day. Most holy Mary protect me. Faithful guardian, my good angel, and you my holy advocates, saints in heaven, assist me. Our Father, Hail Mary, and I believe in God," with three "Hail Maries" in honour of the purity of the Blessed Virgin.

At the beginning of your employments for the day, say : "O Lord, I offer all to thee." Before meals : "O my God, bless me and the food which I am about to take, that I may not commit any excess, but may do all for thy glory." After meals : "I give thee thanks, O Lord, for having bestowed thy benefits upon me who have been thine enemy." When the clock strikes : "O my Jesus, I love thee; never suffer me to offend thee any more." In the time of temptations frequently

repeat: "Jesus, Mary." When conscious or doubtful of having sinned: "O my God, I am sorry for "what I have done, and will do so no more." And if you should sin grievously, go to confession as soon as possible.

SECT. II.—*Method of mental prayer.*

MENTAL prayer consists of three parts: *Preparation, Meditation, and Conclusion.* The *preparation* consists of three acts: of faith in the presence of God, of humility with a short act of contrition, and of supplication for divine light. Saying thus: For the first—"O my God, I believe that thou art "present with me, and I adore thee with all the "devotion of my soul." For the second—"O Lord, "I have deserved, on account of my sins, to have "been long since in hell; O infinite goodness, I "am grieved with my whole heart for having ever "offended thee." For the third—"O my God, for "the love of Jesus and of Mary, enlighten me in "this my prayer, that I may derive advantage from "it." Then say a "Hail Mary" to the Blessed Virgin, to obtain light, and for the same purpose a "Glory be to the Father," to St. Joseph, to your angel guardian, and to the Saints, your advocates. Make these acts with attention, but briefly, and then proceed to the meditation.

In *meditating*, make use of some pious book, at least in the beginning, and lay it aside when you come to any part which particularly strikes you. St. Francis of Sales says, that, in this, you must imitate bees, which settle upon flowers so long as they find honey in them, and then pass on to others. The fruits to be derived from meditation are three: *affections, prayers, and resolutions*; in the exercise of these consist the great advantage of mental prayer. After you have meditated upon some

eternal truth, and God has spoken to your heart, you must then speak to God: First, by raising your affections to him, in acts either of faith, of gratitude, of humility, or of hope; but above all, in repeated acts of love and contrition. St. Thomas says: "Every act of love merits for us life eternal." And every act of contrition obtains for us the same. Acts of love are: "O my God I love thee above all things. I love thee with my whole heart. I desire to do thy holy will in all things. I rejoice that thou art infinitely happy," and the like. For an act of contrition it will suffice to say: "O infinite goodness, I am sorry for having offended thee."

Secondly.—Pray to God for light, humility, or any other virtue, for a happy death, for eternal salvation, but above all, for his love and holy perseverance. And when your soul is in great dryness, repeat: "Help me, O my God: O Lord, have pity on me: My Jesus, mercy." And if you do nothing more than this, your prayer will still be very advantageous.

Thirdly.—Before you finish your prayer, make some particular resolution, such as to avoid some sinful occasion, to bear with what may be disagreeable to you in another person, to overcome some defect, and the like.

In concluding make three acts. First.—Thank God for the lights he has bestowed upon you. Secondly.—Be determined to keep the resolutions you have made. Thirdly.—Ask God's help for the love of Jesus and of Mary to adhere to your good purposes. And end your prayer by recommending to God the souls in purgatory, the prelates of the Church, sinners and all relations and friends with an "Our Father," and "Hail Mary." St. Francis of Sales advises that whatever sentiment may have particularly prevailed in this kind of prayer should

be treasured up, so that it may be recalled to the mind frequently in the course of the day.

Sect. III.—Acts before and after Confession and Communion.

Prayer before Confession.

O God of infinite majesty, behold at thy feet a miserable sinner who has grievously offended thee, but who now most humbly seeks thy pardon. Cast me not away from thy face, O Lord. Do not despise a contrite and humble heart. I give thee thanks for having waited for me until now, and for not having suffered me to die in my sins, and to dwell in hell which I have deserved. I hope, my God, that as thou hast waited for me so long, thou wilt now pardon me, in this confession, through the merits of Jesus Christ, whatever sins I have been guilty of against thee; for which I am heartily sorry, because by them I have lost heaven and deserved hell. But, above all, I am sorry for them with my whole soul, not so much because I have deserved hell, as because by them I have offended thy infinite goodness. I love thee, O my sovereign good; and because I love thee, I am sorry for all the injuries I have ever committed against thee. I have turned my back upon thee, I have lost all respect for thee, I have despised thy grace and thy friendship; in a word, O Lord, I have voluntarily lost thee; pardon me, for the love of Jesus Christ, all my sins, of which I repent with my whole heart and soul; I hate them, I detest and abhor them above every evil. And I repent not only of my mortal sins, but of my venial sins, because these also have been displeasing to thee. I am resolved, for the future, by the assistance of thy grace, never more wilfully to offend thee. Yes, my God, I will rather die than offend thee any more.

Prayer after Confession.

My dear Jesus, how much am I indebted to thee ! Through the merits of thy precious blood I hope that this day I have received thy pardon. I give thee infinite thanks for so great a favour. May I one day come to sing for ever in heaven the praises of thy mercies towards me ! O my God, if hitherto I have so frequently lost thee, I will now never more lose thee. From this day forward I will amend my life in good earnest. Thou indeed deservest all my love, and I desire truly to love thee, and to be never more separated from thee. I have already promised thee, and I now again promise thee, rather to die than offend thee any more. I promise thee also to avoid the occasions of sin, and to take this precaution of _____ (*mention what*) that I may fall no more. But, O Jesus, thou knowest my weakness ; give me grace to remain faithful to thee to the end of my life, and to have recourse to thee whenever I shall be tempted. Most holy Mary, assist me ; you are the mother of holy perseverance.

Acts before Communion.

My beloved Jesus, the true Son of God, who didst die for me upon the cross, in the midst of ignominy and torments, I firmly believe that thou art really present in the most holy Sacrament, and for this my faith I am ready to lay down my life.

My dear Redeemer, I hope in thy goodness and in the merits of thy precious blood, that, coming to me this day, thou wilt inflame my whole soul with thy holy love, and wilt give me all those graces which will be necessary to enable me to remain obedient and faithful to thee till the end of my life.

O my God, the true and only love of my soul,

what more couldst thou do to oblige me to love thee? It was not sufficient for thee to die for me; thou wouldst also institute for me the most blessed Sacrament, to become my food, to give thyself wholly to me, and thus bind and unite thyself to such a vile and ungrateful creature as myself. And thou invitest me to receive thee, and ardently desirest that I should receive thee. O inconceivable love! for God to give himself wholly to me! O my God, O infinitely amiable God, worthy of infinite love, I love thee above all things, I love thee with my whole heart, I love thee more than myself, more than my own life; I love thee because thou art indeed most worthy of love, and I love thee in order to please thee, since thou so much desirest my love. Depart from my soul, all worldly affections; to thee only, O Jesus, my treasure, my all, do I desire to give all my love. Thou wilt now give thyself wholly to me, behold, I give myself wholly to thee. Accept of me to love thee, for I desire no other but thee, and nothing but what is pleasing to thee. I love thee, O my Saviour, and unite my miserable love with the love of all the angels and saints, with that of Mary thy most holy Mother, and of thy eternal heavenly Father. O that I could see thee loved by all! O that I could make thee loved by all mankind, and as much as thou deservest.

Behold, O my Jesus, I now approach to feed upon thy sacred body and blood. And, O my God, who am I? and who art thou? Thou art the Lord of infinite goodness, and I am a vile worm, defiled with many and grievous sins, by which I have expelled thee from my soul: "Lord, I am not "worthy." I am not worthy even to appear in thy presence; I deserve only to dwell in hell abandoned by thee and at a distance from thee. But thou in thy goodness invitest me to receive thee; behold then I come, I come humbled and confounded at

the sight of my many offences against thee, but with full confidence in thy mercy and in thy great love for me. How much am I grieved for having so much offended thee during the time which is past! Thou didst come to give thy life for me, and I have so often despised thy grace and thy love, and exchanged thee for something worse than nothing. I sincerely repent, and am heartily sorry, above all evil, for all my sins, whether grievous or venial, because they have offended thy infinite goodness. I hope that thou hast pardoned me; but, if thou hast not pardoned me, incline unto my aid and forgive me, O Jesus, before I approach and receive thee. Delay not to restore me to thy favour, since thou wilt soon come and take up thy abode within me.

Come then, O Jesus, come to my soul, which longs to receive thee. My only and infinite good, my life, my love, my all, would that I could now receive thee with all the love of all those souls who have ever loved thee most, and with the same fervour with which thy most holy Mother received thee: I desire to unite this my communion with hers. O Blessed Virgin, my holy Mother, Mary, give me your Son, let me receive him from your hands. Say to him that I am your servant, that he may press me with greater love to his bosom now that he comes to take possession of my soul.

Acts after Communion.

THE time after Communion is most precious for obtaining treasures of grace; because the acts which are then made, and the prayers which are then offered, while the soul remains united with Jesus Christ, have greater merit and value than at any other time. St. Teresa says, that our Lord is then within us as on the throne of mercy, and says to

the soul: " My daughter, ask of me whatever thou " pleasest ; for this end am I come to thee, to confer " favours upon thee." O what special favours do those receive who entertain themselves with Jesus Christ after Communion ! The Ven. Father **Avila** never omitted to continue two hours in prayer after Communion. St. Aloysius continued to return thanks to Jesus Christ during three days. Make then the following acts, and take care during the rest of the day to keep yourself united, by means of affections and prayers, with Jesus Christ, whom you have received in the morning.

Behold, O my Jesus, thou art now come to me ; thou art now within me, and art become wholly mine. How can I sufficiently welcome thee, my beloved Redeemer ! I adore thee, and cast myself at thy feet, I embrace thee, press thee to my heart, and thank thee for having deigned to enter into my breast. O Mary, O ye saints my advocates, my angel guardian, thank him for me. Since then, O my divine love, thou art come to visit me with so much love, I give thee my will, my liberty and my whole self. Thou hast given thyself entirely to me ; hence do I now give myself entirely to thee. I desire to be no longer mine ; from henceforward I desire to be thine, and wholly thine. I desire that my whole soul may be thine, my body, my powers, my senses, that all may be employed in serving and pleasing thee. To thee I consecrate all my thoughts, my desires, my affections and my whole life. O Jesus, I will never more offend thee, but will spend the remainder of my life in loving thee who hast so loved me.

Accept, O God of my soul, the sacrifice which I, though so miserable a sinner, offer to thee, I desire nothing but to please and love thee. Do with me, and dispose of me and of all things belonging to me, as thou pleasest. Let thy love destroy in me

all affections which are not agreeable to thee, in order that I may be all thine, and live only to please thee.

I ask thee not for worldly goods, nor for pleasures, nor for honours; but I beseech thee, O my Jesus, to give me a constant sorrow for my sins. Give me thy light, by which I may see how vain are all worldly goods, and how worthy thou art of being loved. Separate me from all attachments to the earth, and unite me entirely to thy holy love, in order that my will from this day may never desire any thing but what thou willest. Grant me patience and resignation in sufferings, in poverty, and in all things disagreeable to my self-love. Grant me meekness towards those who despise me. Grant me a happy death. Grant me thy holy love. And above all, I beseech thee, grant me perseverance in thy grace till the end of my life; never suffer me to be again separated from thee. And for this end grant me the grace always to have recourse to thee and to invoke thy help, O my Jesus, in the time of temptations, and the grace always to seek from thee holy perseverance.

O eternal Father, thy beloved Son Jesus has promised that thou wilt give me whatever I ask of thee in his name: *If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you.* St. John, xvi. 23. In the name, therefore, and through the merits of this thy Son, I ask thee for thy love and for holy perseverance, that I may one day come to love thee in heaven with all my powers, and to sing for ever thy mercies, safe from all danger of being ever again separated from thee.

O most holy Mary, my Mother and my hope, obtain for me these graces which I so much desire, and obtain also for me to love you as my Queen, and ever to recommend myself to you in all my necessities.

SECT. IV.—*Method of hearing Mass.*

IN the Mass the same great action takes place as did formerly on Calvary, with this difference only, that on Calvary the blood of Jesus Christ was shed really, and on the altar it is shed mystically; but in the Mass the merits of Christ's sufferings and death are particularly applied to us. To hear Mass with profit to ourselves, it is necessary to consider the ends for which it was instituted; namely: firstly, to honour God; secondly, to give him thanks for his benefits; thirdly, to make satisfaction for our sins; and fourthly, to obtain his graces and blessings. Hence before Mass may be said the following prayer:—

Eternal Father, in this sacrifice I offer thee thy Son Jesus together with all his merits: first, in honour of thy majesty; secondly, in thanksgiving for all the benefits which I have received and hope for ever to receive from thee; thirdly, in satisfaction for all my sins and for those of all the living and the dead; fourthly, to obtain eternal salvation and the graces by which I may obtain it.

At the elevation of the host. O my God, for the love of this thy Son, forgive me my sins, and grant me holy perseverance. *At the elevation of the chalice.* Through the blood of Jesus grant me thy love and a happy death. *At the Priest's Communion make a spiritual Communion,* saying: O my Jesus, I love thee and desire thee. I embrace thee, and will never more be separated from thee.

SECT. V.—*Acts when visiting the Blessed Sacrament.*

MY Lord Jesus Christ, who through thy love for man continuest day and night in this Sacrament, full of mercy and of love, waiting, inviting, and

receiving all who come to visit thee, I believe that thou art really present in the Sacrament of the altar; I adore thee from the abyss of my nothing, and thank thee for all the graces which thou hast bestowed upon me; especially for having given me thyself in this holy Sacrament, and for having given me Mary thy Mother for my advocate, and for having called me here to visit thee: I this day salute thy most loving and most amiable heart, and I salute it for three ends: first, in thanksgiving for this great gift; secondly, to make thee amends for all the injuries thou hast received in this Sacrament from infidels, heretics and bad Catholics; and thirdly, to adore thee in spirit in all those places where in this Sacrament thou art least reverenced and most abandoned. O Jesus, I love thee with my whole heart. I am sorry for having so often offended thy infinite goodness. I am resolved with the assistance of thy grace never more to offend thee for the future; and for the present, miserable as I am, I consecrate myself entirely to thee, and I give to thee and renounce my whole will, affections, desires, and all things belonging to me. From this day forward do with me in all things whatever thou pleasest. I seek only thee, and desire only thy holy love, final perseverance, and the perfect accomplishment of thy holy will. I recommend to thee the souls in purgatory, and particularly those who have been most devout to thee in this holy Sacrament, and to the ever blessed Mary. I also recommend to thee all poor sinners. I unite, O my dear Saviour, all my affections with the affections of thy most loving heart; and thus united I offer them to thy Eternal Father, and I beseech him in thy name, and for thy love, to receive and accept them.

Prayer before an image or picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Most holy and immaculate Virgin, O Mary my Mother, to you, who are the Mother of my Lord and the Queen of the world, the advocate, the hope and refuge of sinners, do I now have recourse, who am the most miserable of all. I thank you, O great Queen, for the many favours you have already conferred upon me, particularly for having delivered me from hell, which I have so often deserved. I love you, O most amiable Lady, and, for the love which I bear you, I promise always to serve you, and to do all in my power to induce others to serve you. I place all my hopes and safety, next to God, in your holy patronage; accept of me as one of your servants, and take me under your protection, O Mother of mercy. And since you are so powerful with God, deliver me from all temptations, or rather obtain for me strength to conquer them until death. From you do I ask for the true love of Jesus Christ; and with your assistance I hope to obtain a happy death. O Mother, for the love which you bear to God, I beseech you always to help me, but particularly at the hour of my death. Leave me not until you behold me saved in heaven, to bless you and to sing your mercies for all eternity. This is my hope. Amen.

Sect. VI.—*Night Prayers.*

BEFORE you retire to rest, make an examination of conscience in the following manner: first, give thanks to God for all his benefits; secondly, examine all your thoughts, words and actions of the day, and repent of all the sins and defects you may

have committed; and thirdly, make acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity in the following manner:

An act of Faith.

O MY God, I believe whatever truths thy holy Church proposes for my belief, because thou, who art infallible truth, hast revealed them. I believe that thou art my God, the Creator of all things, who rewardest the just with eternal happiness in heaven, and dost punish the wicked with eternal torments in hell. I believe that thou art one in essence and three in persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. I believe in the Incarnation and death of Jesus Christ. I believe in all things which thy holy Catholic Church teaches. I thank thee for having made me a Christian, and, in this holy faith, I am resolved to live and die.

An act of Hope.

O MY God, relying on thy promises, because thou art powerful, faithful, and rich in mercy, I hope through the merits of Jesus Christ, to obtain the forgiveness of my sins, final perseverance, and eternal happiness in heaven.

An act of Charity.

O MY God, because thou art infinite goodness, and worthy of infinite love, I love thee above all things and with my whole heart, and for thy sake, I also love my neighbour as myself.

An act of Contrition.

O MY God, I am sorry with my whole heart for having offended thy infinite goodness. I am re-

solved never more to offend thee with the assistance of thy grace, which I now implore for the present and for the future. And I am resolved also to receive the holy Sacraments both during my life and at the hour of my death.

Conclude by saying the Rosary and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin.

SECT. VII.—*Prayers to Jesus and to Mary to obtain the graces necessary for salvation.*

Prayer to Jesus Christ to obtain his holy love.

My crucified Jesus, I confess thee to be my Saviour, and truly the Son of God, I adore and thank thee for the death which thou hast suffered for me. My dear Redeemer, if hitherto I have offended thee, I am now sorry for it above all evil, and desire only to love thee. Thou hast promised to hear those who pray to thee: therefore do I implore thee through the merits of thy sacred passion, to grant me thy holy love. Oh, draw my heart entirely to thyself, that from this day forward I may love thee with all my strength, and love no other but thee, and thus one day be enabled to come to love thee for ever in heaven.

Prayer to obtain final perseverance.

O SOVEREIGN and eternal God, I give thee thanks for having created me; for having redeemed me through Jesus Christ; for having made me a Christian, by calling me to the true faith; and for having waited for me with so much patience after my many sins against thee. O infinite goodness, I love thee above all things; and I am sorry from the bottom of my soul for all the offences I have ever committed against thee. I hope that thou

hast already pardoned me; but still I am in danger of offending thee again. I beg of thee for the love of Jesus Christ to grant me holy perseverance until the end of my life. Thou knowest my weakness, succour me therefore, and never suffer me to be again separated from thee. Grant that I may rather die a thousand times than once again forfeit thy holy grace. O Mary, Mother, obtain for me holy perseverance.

SECT. VIII.—*Prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary for every day in the week.*

I.—*To obtain the pardon of sins.*

BEHOLD, at your feet, O Mother of God, a miserable sinner who has recourse to you, and places his confidence in you. O mother of mercy, have pity on me. You are the refuge, the hope of sinners; you are, therefore, my refuge and my hope. You have it in your power to save me by your holy intercession; succour me for the love of Jesus Christ, stretch forth your hand to a fallen sinner who commends himself to you. I know that you delight in assisting a poor sinner; assist me therefore now that you have it in your power to assist me. I have forfeited divine grace and lost my soul by my sins; I now put myself into your hands; tell me what I must do to regain the grace of my Lord; for I am willing to do all that thou shalt direct me. To you then do I have recourse. You pray for many others, pray also to Jesus for me; ask him to pardon me, and he will pardon me; tell him that you desire my salvation and he will save me. Manifest the good which you are able to accomplish in behalf of those who confide in you. This is my hope. Amen.

II.—*To obtain Holy Perseverance.*

O QUEEN of Heaven, I dedicate myself to you to be your perpetual servant, and I offer myself to serve you during my whole life ; accept of me, and do not reject me as I have deserved. O Mother, in you do I place all my hopes. I bless and thank God, that, in his mercy, he has given me this confidence in you, which I hold as a great earnest of my salvation. Ah, how have I hitherto miserably fallen, because I have not had recourse to you ! I now hope, through the merits of Jesus and your prayers, that I have been pardoned ; but I may again fall and forfeit divine grace. Most blessed Lady, protect me, and suffer me not to become any more the slave of the devil ; always assist me, I know that you will assist me, and I shall conquer with your assistance, if I recommend myself to you ; but of this I am not afraid ; I am afraid that when in danger of falling I may not call upon you, and may perish. This favour I ask of you, that in all the assaults of the devil I may always have recourse to you, saying, Mary help me, help me Mary, most holy Mother, do not suffer me to lose God.

III.—*To obtain a happy death.*

O MARY, what will my death be ? Considering my sins, and reflecting on that awful moment, when I must breathe my last, and be judged, I tremble and am confounded. Most holy Mother, in the blood of Jesus, and in your prayers are placed my hopes. O consolation of the afflicted, do not abandon me then ; fail not to console me in that great affliction. If you assist me not I shall be lost. Ah blessed Lady, before my death be at

hand, obtain for me a great sorrow for my sins, a real amendment of life and fidelity to God during the remainder of my days. And when I shall arrive at the end of my life, O Mary, my hope, assist me in that distressing moment, and so comfort me that I may not fall into despair at the sight of my sins, which the devil will place before me. Grant that I may invoke you then more frequently and that I may expire with your name on my tongue and the name of your most holy and divine Son. O blessed Lady, pardon my assurance, but before I die, do you in person come to console me with your presence. I am a sinner, it is true, and do not deserve such a favour, but I am devoted to you, I love you, and have great confidence in you. O Mary, I look for you, let me not remain disconsolate. At least, if I be not then worthy of so great a favour, assist me from heaven, that I may depart this life loving God and you, to come to love you eternally in heaven.

IV.—*To escape Hell.*

Most dear and blessed Lady, I thank you for having so often preserved me from falling into hell, which I have deserved by my repeated sins. Alas, there was a time, when I must have stood condemned to that dreadful prison ; and it may be that on my first committing sin, the sentence would have been executed upon me, had not you in your pity assisted me. Although I did not pray to you, yet, through your goodness alone, you did restrain divine justice ; and conquering the hardness of my heart, induce me to place my confidence in you. And oh ! into how many more sins should I have fallen, to the dangers of which I was exposed, had not you, my most affectionate Mother, preserved me from them by the graces which you

obtained for me! O holy Queen, continue, I beseech you, to preserve me from hell. If at one time I did not love you, now, next to God, I love you above all things. Never suffer me to turn my back upon you, and upon God, who, through your means has bestowed so many mercies upon me. Most amiable Lady, suffer me not to have to curse you for all eternity in hell. Could you endure to see one lost who is your servant and loves you? Most blessed Virgin, since you have done so much to save me, accomplish your work, and continue to assist me. But, if you, when I lived forgetful of you, did so favour me, what may I not expect from you now that I love you and recommend myself to you! No, no one can be lost who recommends himself to you. Oh my Mother, leave me not to myself, that I may not be lost; grant that I may always have recourse to you. Save me, my hope, by your powerful intercession, save me from hell; and first save me from sin, which alone can condemn me to hell.

V.— *To obtain Heaven.*

O QUEEN of heaven, who sittest above all the choirs of angelic spirits nearest to the throne of God, from this valley of tears I salute you, miserable sinner as I am, and beseech you to turn towards me those eyes of mercy, which distribute favours whithersoever you direct them. Behold, O Mary, to how many dangers I am now exposed, and must remain exposed so long as I continue in this world, of losing my soul, heaven and God. In you, O blessed Lady, next to God, are placed all my hopes. I love you, and long to approach and behold and praise you in heaven. Oh Mary, when will the day come when I shall see myself saved at your feet, and shall behold you the Mother of my

Lord, and my Mother also, who have taken such pains to save me! O blessed Lady, I have been very ungrateful to you during my life; but if I gain heaven, I shall not be any more ungrateful to you; then shall I love you as much as I am able for all eternity, and shall make amends for my past neglects, by blessing you and thanking you for ever. I give sovereign thanks to God, for his having given me such great confidence in the blood of Jesus, and in you, as to hope that you will deliver me from my sins, and obtain for me light and strength to accomplish the divine will, and finally conduct me to the gates of paradise. Your servants have very much hoped in you, and none have been deceived; neither shall I be deceived. O Mary, you desire nothing else in my regard: you will save me. Pray to your Son Jesus (as I now beseech him through the merits of his bitter passion) to preserve and to increase in me more and more this my confidence in you, and I shall be saved.

VI.—To obtain love for Jesus Christ and for Mary.

O MARY, I know that you are the most noble, the most holy, and the most amiable of all creatures. O blessed Lady, would that all knew you and loved you as you deserve. I am consoled that so many holy souls both in heaven and on earth love your goodness and beauty. Above all I rejoice that God himself loves you more than all men and angels. Most amiable Queen, I a miserable sinner also love you, but I love you too little, I desire to obtain a greater and more tender love for you; obtain this for me: for to love you is a great sign of predestination, and a grace which God does not grant but to those whom he especially wills to be saved.

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I am sensible, O holy Mother, that I am under immense obligations to your Son, and that he is deserving of infinite love. You desire nothing else but to see him loved, to do this is the grace which above all others I beseech you to obtain for me: obtain for me a great love for Jesus Christ. You obtain from God whatever you please; Oh then obtain for me the grace of being so united to the divine will that I may never be separated from it. I ask you not for the goods of this world, nor for honours, nor riches; I ask you for what your heart most desires, that I may love my God. Is it possible that you should not assist me in obtaining this, which is so pleasing to you? No, you will assuredly help me, and pray for me. Pray, and cease not to pray, until you see me in paradise, safe from all danger of again losing my Lord, and secure of ever loving him, together with you, my most dear Mother.

VII.—*To obtain the patronage of Mary.*

O MOST holy Mother, I am sensible of the graces which you have obtained for me, and of the ingratitude with which I have employed them; but notwithstanding this, I will not cease to confide in your mercy, which is much greater than my ingratitude. O my powerful advocate, have pity on me. You are the dispenser of all the graces which God grants to us miserable sinners. For this end has he made you so powerful, so rich and so benign, that you may succour us in our miseries. O mother of mercy, leave me not in my poverty. You are the advocate of the most miserable and abandoned sinners when they have recourse to you; defend me therefore, who recommend myself to you. Say not that my cause is difficult to be gained; whilst the most desperate causes, when

entrusted to you, are always successful. In your hands therefore do I place my eternal salvation, and to you do I consign my soul, which was lost, but which you will save by your holy intercession. This is my hope. Amen.

Chapter Third.

ON THE PRACTICE OF THE CHRISTIAN VIRTUES.

SECT. I.—*The practice of humility.*

HE who is not humble cannot be pleasing to God, who cannot endure those who are proud. He has promised to hear them that pray to him: but if the proud pray to him, the Lord hears them not; while he showers down his graces upon the humble: *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.* St. James iv. 6. Humility is of two kinds, humility of *affection* and humility of the *will*. Humility of *affection* consists in esteeming ourselves as poor miserable beings, who of ourselves know nothing and can do nothing but evil. All that we have and all that we do of good comes from God. But let us attend to the practice. As regards humility of *affection*, we must,

First.—Never place any confidence in our own strength or resolutions, but always mistrust and fear ourselves: *With fear and trembling work out your salvation.* Phil. ii. 12. St. Philip Neri says: “He who fears not, falls.”

Secondly.—We must never glory in any thing we possess, as our talents, actions, birth, parents and the like. Hence it is good not to speak of our own performances, unless it be to notice their defects. But the best is, never to speak of ourselves at all, neither good nor evil; because even in speak-

ing ill of ourselves, the vain glory of being praised often arises within us, or at least of being thought humble, and thus we make our humility become pride.

Thirdly.—We must not be out of humour with ourselves on account of our defects. This is not humility, but pride; and it is also an artifice of the devil to discourage us altogether and to induce us to relinquish a virtuous life. When we have the misfortune to fall, let us say as St. Catherine of Genoa said: “Lord, these are the fruits of my ‘garden.’” Then let us humble ourselves, and immediately arise from the fault we have committed with an act of love and of sorrow, resolving to fall no more, and confiding in the assistance of God. And if we unfortunately fall again, let us always act in the same manner.

Fourthly.—When we see others fall, we must not be pleased with ourselves, but pity those who have fallen, and thank God, and beseech him to keep his hands extended over us; otherwise the Lord will punish us by permitting us to fall into the same, and perhaps greater sins.

Fifthly.—We must always esteem ourselves as the greatest of sinners; and this, although we know that others have committed more sins than ourselves; because our sins having been committed after so many divine lights and graces, may be more heinous in the sight of God than those of others, though theirs be more numerous. St. Teresa says: “Think not that you have made any progress in ‘perfection, unless you esteem yourself as the worst ‘of all, and desire that all others should be pre-‘ferred before you.”

Humility of the *will* consists in being pleased with receiving contempt from others. He who has deserved hell, deserves to be trampled upon by devils for ever. Jesus Christ desires that we should

learn of him to be meek and humble of heart: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart.* St. Matt. xi. 29. Many are humble in words but not in heart. They say: "I am the worst of all. "I deserve a thousand hells." But if any one reprove them, or say anything to displease them, they swell with pride and indignation. Such persons resemble hedgehogs, which as soon as they are touched bustle up, and become all thorns. But how can you say that you are the worst of all, and yet cannot bear a word? "The truly humble "man," says St. Bernard, "esteems himself as vile, "and desires to be reputed as vile by others."

First.—Therefore, if you wish to be really humble, when you receive any admonition, receive it in peace, and thank those who admonish you. St. Chrysostom says, that the just man, when he is corrected, is sorry for his fault; but the proud man is sorry because his fault is discovered. The saints even when they were blamed wrongfully, did not defend themselves, unless it were necessary to avoid scandal in others; otherwise they were silent, and offered all to God.

Secondly.—When you receive any affront, suffer it with patience, and love him the more who despises you. This is the touchstone by which to know whether a person be humble and holy. If he resent, although he should perform miracles, say that he is a wavering reed. Father Alvarez says, that the time of humiliation is the time to gain treasures of merit. You will gain more by receiving an affront in peace, than by fasting ten days on bread and water. The humiliations which we impose on ourselves are good, but those which we receive unexpectedly from others are much better, because in these there is less of ourselves, and more of God; hence there is so much the greater merit in them; if we do but know how

to suffer them in a proper manner. But what is a Christian, if he cannot suffer an affront for the sake of Christ? How many affronts did Jesus Christ suffer for us! scoffs, derisions, scourging, and spitting in his sacred face! Alas, if we had a true love for Jesus Christ, not only should we not resent affronts, but we should be pleased with them, seeing ourselves despised, as Jesus Christ was despised.

SECT. II.—*The practice of mortification.*

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. St. Matt. xvi. 24. This is all that is necessary in order to become a follower of Jesus Christ; the denying of ourselves, and the mortifying of self-love. Do we desire to be saved? we must conquer all, to secure all. How wretched is the soul that allows itself to be guided by self-love! Mortification is of two kinds; *interior* and *exterior*. By *interior* mortification the passions are conquered, and particularly that which prevails over us most. He who does not overcome his predominant passion is in great danger of being lost. On the contrary he who does overcome it, will easily conquer all the rest. Some nevertheless suffer themselves to be swayed by some particular vice, and yet think they are good persons, because they are not overcome by the same vices which they witness in others. "But what will this avail?" says St. Cyril, "a small "chink is sufficient to sink the vessel." It avails nought to say: "I cannot abstain from this vice:" a resolute will overcomes every thing; when it relies on God's assistance which is never wanting.

Exterior mortification is the conquering of the sensual appetites. Worldlings call the saints cruel, because they deny their bodies all sensual

gratifications, and afflict themselves with hair-shirts, disciplines and penances. But St. Bernard says that those are much more cruel towards themselves, who for the sake of the momentary pleasures of this world, condemn themselves to the eternal torments of the next. Others say that the body should be denied all forbidden pleasure, but despise exterior mortifications, saying that interior mortification alone is necessary, that is, the mortification of the will. Yes, it is in the first place necessary to mortify the will, but it is also necessary to mortify the flesh; because if the flesh be not mortified, it will have great difficulty in being obedient to God. St. John of the Cross says, that he who teaches that exterior mortification is not necessary is not to be believed, although he should perform miracles. But to come to the practice.

First.—It is necessary to mortify the eyes. The first darts which strike and often kill the soul, enter through the eyes. The eyes are like infernal hooks which drag persons as it were by force into sin. A certain gentile philosopher, to rid himself of impurity voluntarily put out his eyes. It is not lawful however for us to pluck out our eyes; but we must blind ourselves by means of holy mortification; otherwise it will be difficult for us to keep ourselves chaste. St Francis of Sales says: "He who would keep the enemy from entering into "the fortress must close the gates." It is necessary therefore that we should close our eyes from looking on any object calculated to excite temptations. St. Aloysius, did not dare to cast his eyes even on the face of his own mother. And whenever our eyes accidentally light upon any dangerous object, we must be careful not to look again: "It is not so much looking," says the same St. Francis of Sales, "as looking again that is the "cause of ruin to the soul." Let us, therefore,

be most careful to mortify the eyes, for many on account of not having kept guard over their eyes are now burning in hell.

Secondly.—It is necessary to mortify the tongue by abstaining from detraction, injurious or obscene words. One obscene word spoken in conversation, even in jest, may be the cause of scandal and of thousands of sins. And sometimes a word of double meaning does more harm than one decidedly impure.

Thirdly.—It is necessary to mortify the appetite. St. Andrew Avellino says, that to begin to live a Christian life, a person must begin to mortify his appetite. Many because they live merely to eat, ruin both soul and body. For the most part, diseases are occasioned by excess in eating and drinking. But the worst is, that intemperance is frequently the cause of incontinence. Cassian says, that he who is filled with exciting food and beverage cannot fail to experience many impure temptations. “What then,” some one will say, “must we not eat?” You must eat to preserve life, but you must eat as a man, and not like a brute. - Particularly, if you wish not to be molested with impure temptations, abstain from too great a quantity of food and from too much wine. The scripture says: *Give not wine to kings.* *Prov. xxxi. 4.* By kings is here understood those who subject their senses to reason. Much wine destroys reason, and not only brings with it the sin of drunkenness, which is certainly a mortal sin, but also that of impurity. And let it not be displeasing to you to fast or abstain now and then, particularly on a Saturday in honour of the most holy Mary. Many have done so on bread and water; which would be very proper on the vigils of the seven principal feasts of the Blessed Virgin. At least, I beseech you, observe the fasts of obligation.

Fourthly.—It is necessary to mortify the ears and the hands: the ears, by never listening to immodest discourses or detraction; the hands, by taking care to use them with all caution, and a great horror of all sensuality. Some pretend to be exempt from sin, because they are only in jest; but who, I ask, ever sets himself to play with fire?

SECT. III.—*The practice of charity towards our neighbour.*

HE who loves God, loves also his neighbour; and he who loves not his neighbour, loves not God, for says the divine precept of charity: *He who loveth God, let him love also his brother.* 1 St. John, iv. 21. We must therefore love our neighbour, and this, *internally* and *externally*. And how much must we love him? Hear the rule: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.....and thy neighbour as thyself.* St. Luke, x. 27. We must therefore love God above all things, and more than ourselves, and our neighbour as ourselves. So that, as we desire our own good, and are pleased with all that happens to promote it, and on the contrary are grieved at any evil that befalls us, so we must desire our neighbour's good, take pleasure in it, and on the contrary grieve at the evil that befalls him. Thus also we must not judge or suspect evil of our neighbour without sufficient grounds. And in this consists *internal* charity.

External charity consists in words and in actions towards our neighbour. As to words—

First.—We must abstain from every shadow of detraction. The detractor is hateful both to God and man. On the contrary, he is beloved both by God and man who speaks well of all, and when the fault cannot be excused, excuses at least the intention.

Secondly.—We must be very careful not to relate

to our neighbour the evil which another has said of him ; because from this, lasting hatred and revenge often take their rise. The scripture says that he who sows discord is hateful to God.

Thirdly.—We must be careful not to wound our neighbour's feelings by any biting words, not even in jest. Would you like yourself to be made a jest of, in the same way that you make a jest of your neighbour ?

Fourthly.—We must avoid contentions. Often-times, from a mere nothing, contests arise, which end in injuries and rancour. And we must also guard against becoming of a *contradictory spirit*, as some are, who *gratuitously* contradict every thing. When this occurs, say that the thing appears so to you, and then be silent.

Fifthly.—We must use kind words to all, even to our inferiors ; and hence we must guard against imprecations and injurious language. And when our neighbour is irritated and says provoking things to us, we must answer him mildly, and strife will soon be at an end : *A mild answer breaketh wrath.* *Prov. xv. i.* And when we are disturbed by our neighbour we must be careful not to speak, while passion transports us, which will perhaps make it appear to us necessary to raise our hand, but assuredly if we do so we shall soon repent. St. Francis of Sales says : "I never resented any- "thing that happened to me, without having soon "to repent of what I had done." The rule is, to be silent until our anger has quite subsided. And when our neighbour is disturbed, we must not attempt to correct him at that time, although correction be necessary, because our words cannot then persuade him nor do him any good.

As regards charity in works towards our neighbour,

First.—It consists in assisting him to the best

of our power. We must remember those words of the scripture: *Alms deliver from all sin, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness.* Job, iv. 4. Alms, therefore, will save you from sin and hell. By alms is to be understood every kind of assistance which one neighbour can afford to another. The most meritorious alms is that by which the soul of a neighbour is assisted, which may be done by mildly correcting him, and at a proper time, which may always be chosen. We must not say, as some say: "What does it concern me?" It concerns every one to be a Christian. He who loves God desires to see him loved by others.

Secondly.—We must be charitable to the sick and infirm, who stand in greater need of relief. We must make them small presents if they be poor. At least we must wait upon them and console them, although they should not thank us for doing so: the Lord will reward us.

Thirdly.—Above all we must be charitable towards our enemies. Some are all charity towards their friends, but Jesus Christ says: *Do good to those who hate you.* St. Matt. v. 44. By this is known who is a true Christian; if he seek to do good to one who wishes him evil. And if we can do nothing else for those who persecute us, at least we must pray to God to prosper them, as Jesus commands us: "*Pray for those who persecute you.*" This is the way in which the saints revenged themselves. He who pardons another who has offended him, is sure of being pardoned by God, for God has promised: *Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.* St. Luke, vi. 37. Our Lord once said to Blessed Angela of Foligno, that the most certain sign of a soul being loved by God, is the soul's loving his neighbour who has offended him.

Fourthly.—We must be charitable towards our neighbours who are dead, that is, to the poor souls

in purgatory. St. Thomas says that as we are bound to succour our neighbours who are alive, so we are bound also to be mindful of those who are dead. These holy prisoners endure torments which surpass all the pains of this life, and are in extreme necessity, because they cannot help themselves. A Cistercian monk, who was dead, once spoke thus to the sacristan of his monastery: "Help me, brother, by your prayers; because of myself I can obtain nothing." We must endeavour, therefore, to assist these holy souls, by procuring Masses to be said for them, or at least by hearing Masses in their behalf, or by giving alms, or by offering prayers, and gaining indulgences for them; and they will be most grateful to us by obtaining of God great graces for us, if through our means they shall sooner obtain heaven.

SECT. IV.—*The practice of Patience.*

ST. JAMES says that patience is the perfect work of the soul: *Patience hath a perfect work.* St. James i. 4. It is by patience that we are to obtain heaven. This world is the place of merit, and hence it is not a place of repose, but of labour and sufferings; for this end has God given us life, that by patience we may obtain the glory of heaven. All persons in this world must have sufferings: he who suffers with patience suffers less and is saved; but he who suffers with impatience suffers more and is lost. Our Lord does not send us crosses that we may be lost, as the impatient would tell us, but that we may be saved, and become more glorious in heaven. Sorrows, adversities and all other tribulations received with patience, become the most beautiful jewels of our crown in paradise. When, therefore, we are in tribulation let us take comfort and thank God for them, because it is a sign that God desires

to save us, by chastising us in this life, in which chastisements are light and short, that he may spare us in the next, in which chastisements are grievous and eternal. Unhappy the sinner who is prosperous in this life! it is a sign that God reserves for him an eternal chastisement.

St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, says: "Pain however great becomes palatable, when we look upon Jesus Christ on the cross." St. Joseph Calasantius adds: "He gains not Jesus Christ, who suffers not for Jesus Christ." He, therefore, who loves Jesus Christ, supports with patience all exterior crosses, infirmities, pains, poverty, dis-honour, loss of parents and friends; and all interior crosses, anguish, weariness, temptations, and desolation of spirit; and suffers all patiently. On the contrary, what does he gain who in tribulations becomes impatient and angry? he increases his sufferings, and lays up for himself greater sufferings for another life. St. Teresa writes: "The cross is felt by those who take it up unwillingly; but not by those who willingly embrace it." Hence St. Philip Neri says: "In this world there is no purgatory, but heaven or hell; heaven for those who patiently support tribulations, and hell for those who do not thus support them." To proceed to the practice.

First.—We must practise patience in infirmities, in which the spirit of a person is discovered whether it be gold or lead. Some are all devotion and cheerfulness, when well in health: but when visited with any sickness, lose patience, complain of every thing, and give themselves up to melancholy, and are guilty of many faults: thus the gold becomes lead. St. Joseph Calasantius says: "If there is patience in infirmities, there are no complaints." Some complain and say, "But as I am, I cannot

go to the church, I cannot receive holy communion, nor hear Mass ; indeed I can do nothing.

You cannot do any thing ? you do every thing when you do the will of God. Tell me, why do you wish to do the things you have mentioned ? to please God ? this then, is God's good pleasure that you embrace with patience whatever you suffer, and leave all other things to him. "God," says St. Francis of Sales, "is served more by our "sufferings than by our exertions."

Especially when the infirmity is dangerous, we must accept of it with patience, even death, if the end of our life should be at hand. We must not then say : "But I do not find myself prepared "now ; I could wish to live a little longer, to do "penance for my sins." And who knows, that, if you were to continue to live, you would do this penance, and that you would not fall into greater sins ? How many, after recovering from some dangerous malady, have become worse than before, and have been lost, who perhaps had they died in their illness, would have been saved ! If God wish that you should depart out of this world, conform yourself to his blessed will, and thank him for allowing you the assistance of the last Sacraments, and accept of death with patience, and throw yourself into the arms of his mercy : this acceptance of death in conformity with the will of God, may secure for you eternal salvation.

Secondly.—We must also bear with patience the death of our parents and friends. Some are inconsolable for the death of a parent, and on this account neglect their prayers, the sacraments, and all their devotions. And some will even expostulate with God, saying : "Lord why hast thou done "this?" What rashness ! Tell me what advantage do you gain by so doing ? do you expect to please the person who is dead ; no, you will displease

both him and God. Your parent or friend desires that, through his death, you should become more united to God, and, if he be in purgatory, that you should pray for him.

Thirdly.—We must accept of poverty if God send it us. Should you want even necessaries, say: "My God, thou alone art sufficient for me." An act of this kind would gain for you a treasure in heaven. He who has God, has all good. And hence we should bear with patience the loss of our goods or of our hopes, or even of the persons who succour us. We must be resigned to the will of God, and God will support us; and if he be not pleased to succour us, as we desire, we must be content with what he is pleased to do, because he does it to make trial of our patience, and to enrich us with greater merits and heavenly glory.

Fourthly.—We must accept with patience contempt and persecutions. You will say: "But "what evil have I done, that I should be thus persecuted? Why should I suffer this affront?" Christian brother, repeat the same to Jesus Christ crucified, and he will answer you: "And what "evil have I done, that I should suffer so many "torments, ignominies, and this death upon the "cross?" If then Jesus Christ has suffered all for the love of you, it is no great thing that you should suffer this for the love of Jesus Christ. And especially if you have ever committed any very grievous sin, reflect that by it you have deserved to be now in hell, where much greater sufferings and persecutions are endured from merciless devils. If you suffer any persecution for having done good, be greatly rejoiced, hear what Jesus Christ says: *Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake.* St. Matt. v. 10. And be persuaded of the truth of what the Apostle says, that "*they who*

“would live piously in Jesus Christ must suffer persecution.”

Fifthly.—We must also practise patience in desolations of spirit, which are the greatest sufferings which a soul that loves God can endure. But by them God proves the love of those whom he loves. We must humble ourselves on such occasions, resign ourselves to the will of God, and commit ourselves into his hands. And we must be careful not to neglect any of our accustomed devotions, prayers, sacraments, visits, or lectures. Then, because we do all with irksomeness and pain, all appears to us to be lost: but this is not the case; by persevering, we shall indeed labour without any delight to ourselves, but with the approbation of God.

Sixthly, and lastly.—We must practise patience in temptations. Some cowardly souls, when temptations continue for a long time, give way to despondency, and sometimes go so far as to say: “Surely God wishes me to be lost?” No; God permits temptations not for our ruin, but for our advantage, in order that we may humble ourselves the more and unite ourselves more closely to him, by doing violence to ourselves in making resistance, and by redoubling our prayers; and that thus we may obtain greater merit in heaven. *Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee.* *Tob xii. 13,* thus was it said to Tobias. By every temptation which we overcome, we gain new degrees of glory in heaven and greater strength to resist future temptations. Nor does God ever permit us to be tempted above our strength: *And God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able: but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it.* *I. Cor. x. 13.*

We must nevertheless beseech God to deliver us

from temptations; but when they assail us, we must resign ourselves to his will, imploring him to give us strength to resist them. St. Paul was molested with temptations of the flesh, and besought God to deliver him from them; but the Lord answered him: *My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity.* 2 Cor. xii. 18. In temptations, and especially in those of the flesh, the first remedy is to quit as much as possible the occasions of them; and this immediately, mistrusting our own strength, and having recourse to God for his assistance. And when temptations continue, we must not cease to pray and to repeat: "O Jesus, help me. Mary, help me." The invoking only of these most powerful names of Jesus and Mary, will be sufficient to baffle the most violent attempts of all our infernal enemies. It is also of great use on such occasions to sign ourselves with the sign of the cross upon our foreheads and upon our hearts. With the sign of the cross St. Antony dispelled similar temptations of the devil. It is also particularly useful to make known our temptations to our spiritual father. St. Philip Neri says: "A temptation laid open is half conquered."

SECT. V.—*The practice of conformity to the will of God.*

ALL sanctity consists in the love of God, and the love of God consists in the fulfilment of his holy will. In this is your life: *And life in his will,* says the Psalmist. xxix. 6. He who is united to the will of God, is always in peace, because the divine will deprives all his crosses of their bitterness. Holy souls by saying: "Such is the will of God: "Thus hath it pleased God," find peace in all troubles. *Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad.* Prov. xii. 21. Some one may

say: "Every thing goes wrong with me; God "sends me all kinds of misfortunes." Christian brother, every thing is wrong with you, because you make it wrong; if you resigned yourself to the will of God, all things would be right and for your good. The crosses which God sends you, are misfortunes, because you make them misfortunes; if you received them with resignation as coming from his hands, they would not be misfortunes, but riches for you in heaven. Father Alvarez says: "He "who patiently resigns himself in all troubles to "the divine will advances rapidly towards God." But let us come to the practice.

First.—We must resign ourselves in the infirmities which befall us. Worldlings call infirmities misfortunes, but the saints call them visits and graces of God. In sickness we must indeed take the remedies prescribed for our cure, but always with resignation to whatever God may please to appoint for us. And when we pray for health, it must be with resignation, otherwise we shall not obtain grace. But Oh, how much may be gained in sickness, by offering to God what we suffer! He who loves God with his whole heart desires not to be delivered from sickness that he may avoid sufferings, but by his sufferings desires to please God. It was this love that made scourges, racks and heated plates of iron sweet to the martyrs. But we must be particularly resigned in dangerous diseases. The acceptance of death, in such circumstances, in order to fulfil the divine will, makes us deserving of a reward similar to that of the martyrs who accepted their torments and death in order to please God. He who dies in resignation to the divine will, makes a holy end; and he who is more resigned makes the more holy end. Blosius writes that in death an act of perfect conformity will not only deliver us from hell, but also from purgatory.

Secondly.—We must conform ourselves to the will of God in regard of all our natural defects, such as little talent, low birth, bad health, defective sight, little ability for distinguished offices and the like. Whatever we have, is an alms from God. Could he not have created us an insignificant gnat, or a blade of grass? A hundred years ago what were we but nothing? and what do we desire? It is sufficient that God has given us the capacity of becoming saints. Although of little talent, of delicate health, poor, or servants, yet we may all become saints, if we will, by the assistance of his grace. Oh to how many unhappy beings, have, talents, health, nobility, riches, or beauty, proved the ruin of their souls! And hence we must be content as God has made us; and thank him for ever for the benefits which he has bestowed upon us, and particularly for his having called us to the true faith; this has been a great blessing, for which few thank God as they ought.

Thirdly.—We must be resigned in all adverse circumstances, losses of property, of hopes, or of parents, and also under the affronts which we receive from others. Some one may say: "God does not will sin: why should I resign myself, "when such a one calumniates me, injures me, "strikes me, or defrauds me? this does not happen "through the will of God." Oh what a delusion is this! God does not will the sin of the person in question, but he permits it; and he wills that you should suffer adversity by means of that person. So that it is the Lord who lays such a cross upon you, only through the medium of your neighbour; and hence even in these cases you must embrace the cross as coming from God. Nor should you search for the reasons: St. Teresa says: "If you "are willing to bear only such crosses as are agree- "able to reason, you will never attain to perfec- "tion."

Fourthly.—We must be resigned in dryness of spirit, that is, when our prayers, communions, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, &c. are all tedious and irksome to us. It is sufficient if we please God; and we please him most when we perform our devotions with the least pleasure to ourselves. In no time can we better know our own insufficiency and misery than in the time of aridity: and hence in desolation should we humble ourselves in our prayers and resignedly place ourselves in the hands of God, saying: “Lord I am not worthy of “consolations: I desire nothing but that thou wilt “have pity on me; preserve me in thy grace: and “do with me what thou pleasest.” And thus, we shall gain more in one day of desolation, than in a month of tears and tender devotion. And generally speaking, this should be our continual exercise in all our actions; to offer ourselves to God, for him to do with us what he pleases, always beseeching him, in our prayers, communions, visits, &c.: *O my God, grant me to do thy holy will.* By doing the will of God, we shall do every thing. We should accustom ourselves to have always in our mouths that ejaculation: *Thy will be done.* Even in trifling things which happen to us, we should always repeat: *May the will of God be done.* When we lose property, or a relative dies, or similar things happen, we should always say: “Lord, thus hath it pleased thee, so be it done.” And when we are in fear of any temporal calamity, we should say: “I desire to will all that thou willest.” And thus we shall always be very pleasing to God and always in peace within ourselves.

Sect. VI.—*The practice of purity of intention*

PURITY of intention consists in doing all our actions solely with a view to please God. The

good or bad intention with which we perform our actions makes them good or bad in the eyes of God. St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi says: "God rewards our actions in proportion to the purity of intention with which we perform them." Let us consider how to reduce this to practice.

First.—We must seek God in all our exercises, and not ourselves: if we seek our own satisfaction, we must not expect to receive any reward from God, and this, even in spiritual exercises. How many labour and fatigue themselves in preaching, hearing confessions, serving, and other pious works, and because in these they seek themselves instead of God, lose all they do? The proof of our having done something for God is when we do not seek for approbation and praise from others; when we are not disturbed at the failure of our good undertakings; when we are pleased with any thing good, not so much when it has been done by ourselves, as when it has been done by others. For the rest, having done a good action to please God, we need not perplex ourselves about rejecting vain glory, when praised for what we have done; it will be sufficient to say: "*To God be all honour and glory.*" We should not omit good actions which may give edification to our neighbour for fear of vain glory: God desires that we should do good actions before others, that others may profit by them: *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.* St. Matt. v. 16. When, therefore, you do good actions, have an intention of first pleasing God, and of then giving good example to your neighbour.

Secondly.—We must perform also our corporal actions, such as our labour, eating, drinking, sleeping, and diversions, with a view to please God. Purity of intention is called a celestial alchymy,

by which iron is made gold: that is to say, the most ordinary and trivial actions, when done to please God, become acts of divine love. St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi says: "He who performs all his actions with a pure intention, will go straight to heaven." A certain holy hermit, who, before putting his hand to any work, was accustomed to raise his eyes to heaven, and to keep them in that position for a certain time, being asked what he was doing, answered: "I am taking aim, that I may hit the mark." We must do in like manner; before beginning any action, we must take our aim, saying: "Lord, I do this to please thee."

SECT. VII.—*The practice of avoiding tepidity.*

THOSE who make but small account of venial sins, and abandon themselves to tepidity without any thoughts of rousing themselves from it, live in a state of great danger. It is not those venial sins that are committed through mere frailty, such as useless words, interior disturbances, slight negligences, and the like, which are here spoken of, but those venial sins which are voluntary, particularly if habitual. St. Teresa says: "God can deliver us from deliberate sin, even the most trivial." Father Alvarez says: "Trivial lies, slight aversions, or acts of culpable curiosity, small acts of impatience, or of intemperance, do not indeed kill the soul, but they weaken it so much, that, on the assault of any grievous temptation, it will not have strength to resist and will fall." So that deliberate venial sins while they weaken the soul, deprive it of the divine assistance; for it is just that God should deal sparingly with those who act sparingly towards him: *He who sows sparingly, shall also reap sparingly.* 2 Cor. ix. 6. And on this account, those should be particularly afraid

who have received special graces from God. Still more should those fear, whose venial sins are committed with an attachment to some passion, as ambition, or covetousness, or aversion, or inordinate affection towards another. To such persons it not unfrequently happens as to gamblers, who having lost a great deal, say at last: "All may go," and finish by losing all they are worth. How wretched is the poor soul that is bound by passion, which blinds her, and will not suffer her to see what she does. Let us attend to the practice, and see what we must do to deliver ourselves from this miserable state of tepidity.

First.—We must have a sincere desire to be freed from it. A good will lessens fatigue and gives strength to go forward. And we must be convinced that in the way of God, he who does not go forward goes backward; and will continue to go backward till he falls down some precipice.

Secondly.—We must endeavour to discover the vice which prevails most over us, as anger, ambition, inordinate affections to persons or property; a resolute will, with the help of God, overcomes every thing.

Thirdly.—We must avoid the occasions of our sins, otherwise all our resolutions will fall to the ground.

Fourthly.—We must, above all, be diffident of our own strength, and continually pray to God to help us in danger, and to deliver us from those temptations through which we may fall into sin: this is the meaning of that prayer: *Lead us not into temptation.* He who prays, obtains: *Ask and you shall receive.* *St Luke* iv. 9. It is the promise of God which cannot fail; and hence we must always pray, and cease not to repeat to ourselves: "We must pray always, we must pray always; O my God help me, make haste to help me."

SECT. VIII.—*The practice of devotion to the Blessed Virgin.*

With regard to this devotion, I hope, dear reader, that you are fully persuaded of how great advantage it is towards securing salvation to be devout to the Blessed Virgin. And if you would be more thoroughly convinced of it, read *The Glories of Mary*. Here we speak only of those things which may be practised in order to obtain the protection of the holy Mother of God.

First.—Every morning and evening, rising and going to bed you may say three *Hail Marys*, and add this short prayer: “Through thy pure and immaculate conception, O holy Mary, purify my body and sanctify my soul.” And place yourself under her protection that she may preserve you from sin during the day or night. As often as you hear the clock strike you may say a *Hail Mary*: and do the same on entering or going out of your house or when you pass any statue of the Blessed Virgin. Also at the beginning or end of any employment, whether temporal or spiritual, as studying, working, eating, or sleeping, you may say a *Hail Mary*.

Secondly.—You may say the rosary, with meditations on the mysteries, every day, or at least five mysteries. Many devout persons say the Office of the Blessed Virgin; at least it would be well to say the Little Office, of the Name of Mary, which is very short, composed of five short psalms.

Thirdly.—You may say every day an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary* in honour of the Blessed Trinity, in thanksgiving for the graces and favours conferred on Mary. The Blessed Virgin once revealed to a certain devout person that this devotion was very acceptable to her.

Fourthly.—You may fast on Saturdays in honour

of Mary, or on the vigils of her principal feasts, in the ordinary way, or restrict yourself to one kind of food, or abstain from any kind of meat that you are particularly fond of. In a word perform some mortification on a Saturday, and on the vigils above mentioned, out of devotion to this Queen of heaven, who, according to St. Andrew of Crete, is "accustomed to bestow great favours in return for such little things."

Fifthly.—You may make a visit every day to your protectress, and beg of her holy perseverance and the love of Jesus Christ.

Sixthly.—You may read every day some book concerning the Blessed Virgin, or say at least some prayer to her. For this purpose are placed prayers to Mary for every day in the week, in Chap. II, Sect. VII. of this third part.

Seventhly.—You may perform Novenas on the seven principal feasts of Mary, and request your confessor to point out to you what devotions and mortifications will be most proper for you on such occasions; or you may say nine *Hails Maries*, and the *Glory be the Father* nine times, and seek to obtain from her, on each day of the novenas, some particular favour which you most desire.

Lastly.—Recommend yourself frequently in the course of the day to this divine Mother, and particularly in time of temptation, saying and repeating: "Mary help me; holy Mother of God, help me." And if you are devout to Mary, endeavour to gain over as many as you are able of your relations, friends, and servants to be devout to the Holy Mother of God.

SECT. IX.—Practical means of acquiring the love of Jesus Christ.

JESUS CHRIST ought to possess our whole love. He is indeed deserving of it, because he is a God

of infinite goodness, and because he has so loved us as to die for us. Oh how great are our obligations to Jesus Christ! whatever we have of good, lights, calls, pardons, helps, hopes, consolations, tendernesses of devotion, loving affections, we have all from Jesus Christ. But let us come to the means of acquiring the love of Jesus Christ.

First.—We must desire to love Jesus Christ, and hence we must frequently in our prayers beseech him to teach us to love him, and also in our communions and visits to the Blessed Sacrament. And this grace we should seek for through Mary, our good angel, and our patron saint. St. Francis of Sales says that the grace of loving Jesus Christ contains all other graces, because he who truly loves Jesus Christ cannot be wanting in any virtue.

Secondly.—If we would acquire the love of Jesus Christ, we must expel from our hearts all earthly affections: in a heart full of the love of the world there is no room for divine love. St. Philip Neri says: “As much love as we give to creatures, so much do we take away from God.”

Thirdly.—We must frequently exercise ourselves, particularly in prayer, in making acts of love for Jesus Christ. Acts of divine love are the fuel which keeps alive the fire of holy charity. We may make acts of love, of complacency; saying: “O Jesus, I rejoice that thou art infinitely happy, “that thy Eternal Father loves thee as himself.” Of benevolence: “I desire, O Jesus, that all men “may know and love thee.” Of preference: “O “my Jesus, I love thee above all things, I love “thee more than myself.” We should also make frequent acts of contrition and sorrowful love.

Fourrrhly.—He who would become truly inflamed with divine love, must meditate frequently on the passion of Jesus Christ. It was revealed to a holy solitary, that there is no exercise so proper to

kindle divine love in our souls, as that of frequently meditating on the pains and ignomines which Jesus Christ has suffered for the love of us. It is impossible for a soul that frequently meditates on the passion of Jesus Christ, not to acquire divine love. Jesus Christ, although he might have redeemed us with a single prayer or by one drop of his blood, yet chose to suffer all kinds of torments and to shed the last drop of his blood, in order to draw our hearts to love him ; hence he who meditates on the passion of his Saviour does what is very pleasing to him. On this account meditate frequently on the sorrows of Jesus ; at least every Friday, the day on which he died upon the cross for the love of us. For this purpose many meditations on the passion of our Lord are introduced in the first and in the second parts of this book. And for the greater consolation of souls who desire to love Jesus Christ, are added the following considerations, under the title of *Darts of Fire*, with many passages from the Scriptures, which treat of the love which Jesus Christ has shown us in the great work of our redemption.

DARTS OF FIRE;

OR,

PROOFS GIVEN US BY JESUS CHRIST OF HIS LOVE FOR,
US IN THE GREAT WORK OF OUR REDEMPTION.

HE who considers the immense love which Jesus Christ has shown us in his life and particularly in the sufferings which he endured for us in his passion and death, cannot possibly but be affected and excited to love a God who has so loved us. St. Bonaventure calls the wounds of our Blessed

Redeemer, wounds which penetrate the hardest hearts, and inflame the coldest souls with divine love. Hence let us proceed to consider in this short examination of the love of Jesus Christ, according to what the Scriptures attest, how much our loving Redeemer has done, to express his love for us, and to oblige us to love him.

I. *He hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us. Eph. v. 2.* God had bestowed great benefits upon man in order to obtain his love; but ungrateful man not only did not love him, but would not even acknowledge him for his Lord. Only in one nation of the earth, in Judea, was he acknowledged as the God of a chosen people; and even here he was more feared than loved. But as he desired to be more loved than feared by us, he became man like unto us, chose a life of poverty, suffering and obscurity, and a death most bitter and ignominious; and why? to attract our hearts to love him. If Jesus Christ had not redeemed us, he would not have been less happy than he always had been; yet he chose to purchase salvation for us, by as much labour and suffering as though his happiness depended upon ours. He could have redeemed us without any sufferings: but no, he chose to deliver us from eternal death by his own death, and though he had it in his power to redeem us in a thousand other ways, he chose the most humiliating and painful way of dying in torments upon a cross, in order to gain the affections of us ungrateful worms of the earth. And what was the cause of his being born in such poverty, of his life being spent in such hardships, and of his death upon the cross in such pain and desolation, if not the love which he bore towards us?

O my Jesus, may the love which caused thee to die for me on Calvary, induce me to die to all

worldly affections, and consume me in that holy fire which thou didst come to cast upon the earth. I condemn from my soul all those unworthy pleasures which have cost thee so much pain and sorrow. I am grieved, O my dear Redeemer, from the bottom of my heart, for all my offences against thee. For the future I will rather die than offend thee, and will do all in my power to please thee. Thou hast spared nothing for the love of me, nor will I spare anything for the love of thee. Thou hast loved me without reserve, I will love thee without reserve. I love thee, my only good, I love thee, my love my all.

II. *God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son.* St. John iii. 16. Oh how much does this word *so* signify ! It implies that we can never comprehend the excess of love which induced God to send his Son to die for the salvation of lost man. And who could have given us this infinitely precious gift of love, but a God of infinite love ?

I give thee thanks, O Eternal Father, for having given me thy Son for my Redeemer. And I thank thee, O divine Son of God, for having redeemed me with so much pain, and so much love. What would now become of me, after so many injuries against thee, if thou my Jesus, hadst not died for me ? Oh that I had died rather than ever offended thee, my Saviour ! Give me a share of that hatred which thou didst entertain for my sins during thy life, and pardon me. But thy pardon alone will not satisfy me ; thou art most worthy of all love, who hast so loved me as to die for me, O that I may so love thee as to die for thee. I love thee, O infinite goodness, with my whole soul, I love thee more than myself ; on thee do I fix all the affections of my heart. Assist me, that I may never more be ungrateful to thee as I hitherto have been. Tell me, what thou wouldest have me to do ;

with thy grace I will do all, all that thou requirest of me. Yes, Jesus, I love thee, and desire always to love thee, my treasure, my life, my love and my all.

III. *Neither by the blood of goats or of calves, but by his own blood, entered once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption.* *Heb. ix. 12.* And what could the blood of calves, or of all mankind avail, in obtaining divine grace? Only the blood of this Man-God could merit our pardon and eternal salvation. But if God himself had not devised this mode of redeeming us, by dying himself for us, who could have ever had the most distant idea of it? his love devised and accomplished it. Holy Job therefore had great reason to exclaim: *What is man that thou shouldst magnify him? or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?* *Job, vii. 17.*

O my Jesus, one heart is not sufficient to love thee, and were I to love thee with the hearts of all mankind, it would still be too little. What ingratitude, therefore, would it be, if I were to divide my heart between thee and creatures? No, my love; thou desirest my whole heart, and indeed thou art worthy of it, and to thee do I wholly give it. And if I know not how to give it wholly to thee, take it to thyself, and enable me to say with truth: "*O thou the God of my heart.*" O my Redeemer, through the merits of thy abject and painful life, grant me true humility, that I may be enabled to love contempt and obscurity. Grant that I may lovingly embrace sickness, affronts, persecutions, interior trials, and all crosses which come to me through thy hands. Grant that I may love thee, and dispose of me as thou pleasest. O inflamed heart of Jesus, inflame me with thy holy love, by enabling me to know thy infinite goodness. Make me wholly thine, before I depart this life. I love thee, O Jesus, who art so worthy of

love, and so much desirer my love; I love thee with all my heart; I love thee with all my soul.

IV. *The goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared.* Tit. iii. 4. God has loved man from all eternity: *I have loved thee with an everlasting love.* Jer. xxxi. 3. St. Bernard says that before the incarnation of the Word, the divine power appeared in the creation of the world, and the divine wisdom in the government of it; but when the Son of God was made man, then appeared his love for man. And indeed after we have seen Jesus Christ lead so painful a life, and die such a bitter death, we should do him a great injury, if we doubted for one moment of the greatness of his affection towards us. Yes, he has loved us to excess; and hence he desires that we should always love him. He has died for us, that we may live for him: *Christ died for all, that they also who live, may not live to themselves, but to him who died for them, and rose again.* 2 Cor. v. 15.

O my Saviour, when shall I begin to understand the love which thou hast shown towards me? Hitherto, instead of loving thee, I have, repaid thy favours with injuries and contempt. But since thou art infinite goodness, I will not lose confidence. Thou hast promised to forgive those who repent: in thy mercy fulfil thy promise in me. I have dishonoured thee by preferring my own gratifications before thee; but now I am sorry with my whole soul for having done so, and nothing so much afflicts me as the remembrance of having offended thee, my sovereign good; pardon me and unite me wholly to thee in eternal bands of love, that I may never more leave thee, and live only to obey and love thee. Yes, O Jesus, I desire to live only for thee, and to love only thee. I had forsaken thee for creatures; but now I forsake all, and give myself entirely to thee. I love thee, O God

of my soul, I love thee more than myself. Holy Mary, Mother of God, obtain for me to be faithful to God until the end of my life.

V. *By this hath the charity of God appeared towards us, because God hath sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we may live by him.* 1 St. John, iv. 9. All men were dead in sin, and would have remained dead, had not the Eternal Father sent his son to restore them to life by his own death. But how? a God to die for man! a God! And who is man? "Who am I?" says St. Bonaventure, "Why, O Lord, why hast thou so much 'loved me?'" But it is in this that the infinite love of God shines forth; "*In this hath appeared the charity of God.*" The holy Church exclaims, "O 'wonderful condescension of thy love towards us! 'O inestimable love of charity, that thou shouldst 'deliver up thy Son to redeem thy servant!"

Thou then, O my God, hast done this, in order that we may live for Jesus Christ. Yes, it is but just that we should live for him who has given his life and shed his blood for us. My dear Redeemer, at the sight of thy wounds and of the cross upon which thou didst die for me, I consecrate my life and my whole will to thee. Oh make me wholly thine, that so from this day forward I may neither seek nor desire any thing but thee. I love thee, O infinite goodness; I love thee, O infinite love; grant that I may live always repeating "My God, "I love thee, I love thee;" and grant that these may be my last words in death, "my God, I love "thee, I love thee."

VI. *Through the bowels of the mercy of our God, in which the Orient from on high hath visited us.* St. Luke, i. 78. Behold the Son of God comes into this world, and he comes urged thereto by the bowels of his mercy. But, O Lord, if thou hast compassion for lost man, would it not be sufficient

to send an angel to redeem him? No, replies the Eternal Word, I will myself come, that man may learn how much I love him. St. Augustin writes: "For this end chiefly did Christ come, that man "might know how much God loves him." But, O Jesus, although thou didst come to make us love thee, how many are there who do not truly love thee? Wretch that I am! Thou knowest how I have loved thee during the time that is past thou knowest how I have despised thy love. O that I could die with grief! I am sorry, my dear Redeemer, for having so despised thee.

Ah! forgive me, and with thy forgiveness grant me to love thee. Never suffer me to be again unmindful of the great affection which thou hast shown towards me. At present I love thee, but I love thee not enough; for thou art deserving of infinite love. Ah! my Saviour, my joy, my life, my all, whom shall I love, if I love not thee, who art infinite goodness? I consecrate all my inclinations to thy holy will; and at the sight of the sufferings which thou hast endured for me, I offer myself to thee to suffer whatever thou pleasest. Remove from me all occasions of sin: *lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* Deliver me from offending thee, and dispose of me as thou pleasest. I love thee, O infinite goodness, and I am content to suffer all kinds of pain, to be even annihilated, rather than to live without loving thee.

VII. *And the Word was made flesh.* St. John i. God sends the Archangel Gabriel to ask of Mary her consent to accept of Jesus for her Son; Mary gives her consent; and behold the Divine Word is made man. O prodigy of astonishment to heaven and to all nature! *the Word made flesh*, a God made man! What would it be to see a king become a worm to save by his own death the life of

an insignificant insect of the earth? O my Jesus, thou art my God, who, though incapable of death, wouldest become man and subject thyself to the power of death, in order to give me life!

My dear Redeemer, how, at the sight of the many mercies and love which thou hast shown me, do I not die with grief? Thou didst come from heaven to seek me the lost sheep; and I have so many times cast thee away from me, preferring my own miserable pleasures before thee. But since thou desirest me, I leave all: I desire to be thine, and I desire no other but thee. I choose thee for the sole object of my affections. *My beloved to me, and I to him.* Thy thoughts are on me, and I desire to think of no other but thee. Grant that I may always love thee and never cease to love thee. Because I love thee, I am content to remain deprived of all sensible consolation, even to suffer every kind of pain. I now see that thou desirest that I should be all thine, and such do I desire to be. I am sensible that all that is in the world, is lies, deceit, smoke, mire and vanity. Thou alone art my true and only good, thou alone canst satisfy me. "My God, I desire thee alone. Hear "me, O Lord, thee only do I desire."

VIII. *He debased himself.* *Phil. ii. 7.* Behold the only begotten Son of God, omnipotent and true, true God with his Father, born as a little infant in a stable. *He debased himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in fashion found as a man.* *Phil. ii. 7.* He who would see God debased, let him enter the stable of Bethlehem, and he will find a helpless infant, bound in swaddling-clothes, weeping and shivering with cold. Tell me, O holy faith, whose son is this poor infant? Faith answers: he is the true Son of God and is himself truly God. And what has reduced him to this wretched state? The

love which he bore for men. And is there one to be found amongst men who does not love him?

Thou didst spend then, O Jesus, all thy life in pain and suffering, to make me sensible of thy love for me, and I have spent my life in despising and offending thee by my sins! O make me sensible of the evil which I have done, and of the love which thou deservest. But since thou hast borne with me until now, never suffer me any more to afflict thee. Inflame my whole soul with thy holy love, and remind me continually of all that thou hast suffered for me, that from henceforth I may forget all, and think of nothing but of loving and pleasing thee. Thou didst come upon the earth to reign in our hearts: take away, I beseech thee, every thing from my heart which may hinder thee from entirely possessing it. Grant that my will may be always conformed to thine, and thine be mine and the rule of all my actions and desires.

IX. *A Child is born to us, and a son is given to us.* Is. ix. 6. Behold in fine for what end the Son of God was pleased to be born an infant,—to give himself to us from his infancy, and thus induce us to love him: "For what end," says St. Francis of Sales, "does Jesus assume the lovely form of an infant, if not to induce us to love him and to place our confidence in him?" And St. Peter Chrysologus: "Thus would he be born who desired that we should love him."

My dear infant Saviour, I love thee and place all my confidence in thee. Thou art all my hope, thou art all my love. And what would become of me, if thou hadst not come down from heaven to save me? Hell would be my portion for the sins I have committed against thee. Blessed be thy mercy, for being so ready to pardon me, if I repent of my sins. Yes, I will repent with my whole heart, O Jesus, for having despised thee.

Receive me into thy favour, and grant that I may die to myself, to live only for thee, my only good. Burn, O consuming fire, every thing within me that is displeasing in thy sight, and draw all my affections to thee. I love thee, O God of my soul, I love thee, my treasure, my life, my all. I love thee, and I desire to expire with these words, my God, I love thee, that I may then begin to love thee with that perfect love which will never end.

X. The holy prophets of old sighed for many years, for the coming of our Saviour. They exclaimed: *Drop down dew, ye heavens from above, and let the clouds rain the just one.* Isa. xlv. 8. *Send forth, O Lord, the Lamb.* Isa. xvi. 1. *Show us, O Lord, thy mercy; and grant us thy salvation.* Ps. lxxxiv. 8. *O that thou wouldest rend the heavens and wouldest come down: the mountains would melt away in thy presence.....the waters would burn with fire.* Isa. Ixiv. 1. Lord, said they, when men shall see thee descended upon the earth, out of love for them, the mountains will vanish; that is, men in serving thee will overcome all difficulties which before appeared to them insuperable mountains: *the waters will burn with fire;* that is, the coldest hearts will burn with thy love when they behold thee made man for the love of them. And indeed this has been verified in many loving souls, in those of a St. Teresa, of a St. Philip Neri, of a St. Francis Xavier, who even in this life were all in flames with this holy fire. But what are these? Alas! they are but too few.

O my Jesus, of the number of these few do I desire to be. I have deserved to burn long ago in hell, separated from thee, to hate thee for ever. But no, thou hast continued to bear with me with so much patience, that thou mayest see me burn, not with this dreadful fire, but with the blessed fire of thy holy love. For this purpose hast thou

given me so many lights and knocked so frequently at the door of my heart, while I remained at a distance from thee; in a word, thou hast done so much in order to draw me by thy sweet attractions to love thee. Behold I am already thine. I desire to be all thine and for ever. It is for thee now to make me faithful, and this I confidently hope for from thy bounty. Ah my God, who shall have the heart to leave thee, and to live even for one moment without thy love? I love thee, O my Jesus, above all things; but this is not much. I love thee with my whole heart and soul, more than myself; and still this is but little. O Jesus, hear me, grant me greater love, greater love, greater love. O Mary, pray to God for me.

XI. *Despised and the most abject of men. Isa. liii. 3.* Behold what was the life of the Son of God made man: *the most abject of men*; he was treated as the most vile, the last of men. And to what greater abjection could the life of Jesus Christ have been reduced, than to be born in a stable, to live in a carpenter's cottage unknown and despised, to be bound as a criminal, scourged like a slave, buffeted, treated as a fool, spit upon, and to die as a malefactor executed upon a disgraceful gibbet? St. Bernard exclaims: "O the most abject and the most exalted!" O God, thou art the Lord of all: and how art thou content to be the most despised of all? And I, my Jesus, seeing thee thus humbled for me, how can I pretend to be esteemed and honoured by others? Sinner, why shouldst thou be proud?

Alas! my despised Redeemer, make me by thy example in love with contempt and obscurity. Henceforth I hope with thy assistance to embrace all the disgrace that may come upon me, for the love of thee who hast embraced so much disgrace for the love of me. Pardon me the pride of my

past life, and give me thy love. I love thee, O my despised Jesus. Thou goest before me with thy cross, and I will follow thee with mine, and will not leave thee until I am crucified for thee, as thou wast crucified for me. My Jesus, my despised Jesus, I embrace thee, and desire to live and die in thy embraces.

XII. *A man of sorrows.* Isa. liii. 3. What was the life of Jesus Christ? a life of sorrows; a life from beginning to end full of external and internal sorrows. But what most afflicted Jesus Christ during his whole life was the sight of the sins and ingratitude with which men would repay the sufferings which he was undergoing for the love of us: such a sight made him the most afflicted of men. O my Jesus, I also was one who concurred in afflicting thee by my sins during thy whole life. And why do I not say as did St. Margaret of Cortona, when exhorted by her spiritual director to console herself and not to weep, for God had pardoned her: "Ah father, and how shall I cease to "weep, when my sins afflicted Jesus Christ during "the whole of his life?"

Oh that I might be able to die of grief, O Jesus, as often as I remember how much bitterness I have caused thee during the days of my life! Alas, how many nights have I slept deprived of thy grace! How many times hast thou pardoned me, and I have as often again turned my back upon thee! My dear Lord, I am sorry above every evil for having offended thee, and I love thee with my whole heart, I love thee with my whole soul. Never permit me to be again separated from thee. *Most sweet Jesus, suffer me not to be separated from thee.* My Jesus, hear me, *suffer me not to be separated from thee.* Grant I may rather die than ever betray thee again. O mother of holy perseverance, Mary, obtain for me holy perseverance.

XIII. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. St. John, xiii. 1. The love of friends for us increases at our death, when we must be separated from those whom we love; and hence at that time they endeavour more than at any other to testify their love for us. Jesus during his whole life manifested his affection for us; but when he drew near his death, he was pleased to give us excessive proofs of his love. And what greater proof could our loving Lord give us, than to shed his blood and lay down his life for each one of us? Yet, not content with this, he was pleased to leave us for our food the same body and blood that he sacrificed for us on the cross, in order that every one who should receive him might become united with him, and thus our love be increased towards him. Oh infinite bounty, Oh infinite love! Oh my beloved Jesus, replenish my heart with thy holy love, that I may forget myself and the world, to think only of loving and pleasing thee. To thee do I consecrate my body and soul, my will, my liberty, my whole self. Hitherto I have sought my own gratification, to thy great displeasure: but I am sovereignly sorry for it, my loving and crucified Jesus; henceforth I will seek nothing but thee: "*My God and my all.*" I desire only thee, and nothing more. Oh that I might be entirely consumed for thee, as thou wast entirely consumed for me. I love thee, my only good, my only love. I love thee, and abandon myself entirely to thy holy will. Grant that I may love thee, and do with me what thou pleasest.

XIV. My soul is sorrowful even unto death. St. Matt. xxvi. 38. Such are the words which escaped from the sorrowful heart of Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, before he went to die. Alas! whence arose this his great sorrow, which was so great as to be capable of taking away his

life? From the sight of the torments he was about to suffer? No, because he beheld these from the first moment of his incarnation; he saw them and voluntarily embraced them: *He was offered because it was his own will.* Isa. liii. 7. His sorrow arose from the sight of the sins which men would commit after his death. "For he then beheld," says St. Bernardin, "every particular sin of each one of us."

It was not then, O Jesus, the sight of the scourges of the thorns and of the cross which so afflicted thee in the garden; but the sight of my sins, every one of which so oppressed thy heart with sorrow and sadness, as to cast thee into an agony and sweat of blood. Behold the recompense I have made thee for the love which thou didst show me in dying for me. Alas, give me some share of the sorrow which thou didst experience in the garden for my sins, that this sorrow may afflict me during the remainder of my life. My dear Redeemer, O that I were able to console thee with my sorrow as much as I then afflicted thee! I am grieved from the bottom of my heart for having preferred my own wretched sinful inclinations before thee. I am grieved, and love thee above all things. I know that thou, although offended by me, demandest my love, and desirest that I should love thee with my whole heart: "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul.*" Yes, my God, I love thee with my whole heart, I love thee with my whole soul; and thou givest me the love which thou requirest of me. If hitherto I have sought myself, I will now seek only thee. And seeing that thou hast loved me more than others, I will endeavour to love thee more than others love thee. Draw me always, O Jesus, to thy love, by the odour of thy ointments, which are the lovely attractions of thy grace. In fine, enable me to correspond with the great affection of

a God towards me, an ungrateful worm and perfidious traitor. Mother of mercy, Mary, help me with your holy prayers.

XV. *They took Jesus and bound him.* St. John, xviii. 12. A God taken and bound! how must the angels of heaven have been struck dumb with amazement when they beheld their Lord and king dragged with his hands bound, in the midst of soldiers, through the streets of Jerusalem? And what ought to be our sentiments when we behold our God submit to be bound for the love of us like a robber, to be presented before judges who will condemn him to death? "What has thou to do, "O Jesus," cries out St. Bernard, "with the fetters " of malefactors," thou who art infinite majesty and goodness? These belong to us sinners who deserve hell, but not to thee who art innocence itself, and the saint of saints. St. Bernard continues: "What hast thou done, my most innocent Saviour, " that thou shouldst be thus condemned? Ah, I "will tell thee, my Jesus: the crime which thou " hast committed is thy too great love for me."

My beloved Jesus, I kiss the fetters which bind thee; these are my deliverance from the eternal chains which I have deserved. Wretch that I am, how many times have I renounced thy friendship, and made myself the slave of Lucifer, by dishonouring thy infinite majesty! I am sorry above every evil for having been guilty of so great an injury against thee. Alas, my God, bind to thy sacred feet, this my will with the sweet bands of thy holy love, that I may will nothing but what is pleasing to thee. Grant that I may make thy will the sole rule of my whole life. Grant, that as thou hast so much care for my good, I may have no other care but to please thee. I love thee, my sovereign good, I love thee, the only object of all my affections. I know that thou alone hast truly loved me, and

thee only do I desire to love. I renounce all things else; thou alone art sufficient for me.

XVI. *He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins. Isa. liii. 5.* A single blow endured by this Man-God would have been sufficient to satisfy for the sins of the whole world; but Jesus Christ would not be content with this, he would be "*wounded for iniquities and bruised for our sins*," that is, rent and torn from head to foot, so that no part remained sound of his whole sacred body. Hence the same prophet beholds him covered with wounds, as a leper is covered with sores: *We have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted.* liii. 4.

O sacred wounds of my afflicted Saviour, you are all so many pledges of the love of my Redeemer towards me. You oblige me by the most affecting language to love him, in return for all the sufferings which he has been pleased to endure for the love of me. O my beloved Jesus, when shall I give myself wholly to thee, as thou hast given thyself wholly to me? I love thee, my sovereign good, I love thee, O God, who hast so loved me. O God of love, give me thy love. Grant that by my love I may make some amends for the bitterness which I have hitherto caused thee. Grant that I may expel from my heart every thing which tends not to thy love. Eternal Father, "*look upon the face of thy Son;*" look on his wounds, which implore thee to have pity on me; and through them pardon me the outrages I have committed against thee, and take possession of my whole heart, that I may neither love, seek, nor desire any thing but thee. With St. Ignatius I beseech thee: "*Give me only thy grace and thy love, and I am sufficiently rich.*" This is all I ask for, O God of my soul: give me thy grace and thy love, and I have no

desire for any thing more. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me.

XVII. "*Hail, king of the Jews.*" Thus did the Roman soldiers scornfully salute our Blessed Redeemer. After having treated him as a mock king, and crowned him with thorns, they kneel before him, and salute him as king of the Jews, and then rising up, with scorn and derision, they buffet him and spit in his face. St. Matthew writes, xxvii. 29. *And plating a crown of thorns they put it on his head.....And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying: Hail, king of the Jews, And spitting upon him, they took the reed, and struck his head.* And St. John xix. 3, adds: *And they gave him blows.*

O my Jesus, the barbarous crown of thorns on thy head, the vile reed in thy hands, the purple garment of mockery on thy shoulders, proclaim thee indeed my King, the King of love. The Jews will not acknowledge thee for their king, and say to Pilate: "*We have no King but Cesar.*" My beloved Redeemer, if others will not own thee for their king, I will most lovingly acknowledge thee, that thou mayest be the only king of my soul. To thee I consecrate my whole self, dispose of me as thou pleasest. Thou hast suffered so much scorn, torments and death, to gain our hearts and to reign in them by thy love: *For to this end Christ died... ...that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.* Rom. xiv. 9. Take then possession of my whole heart, O my beloved king, and reign and rule there for ever. Hitherto I have refused to acknowledge thee as my Lord, in order to serve my passions: now I desire to be all thine, and to serve thee alone. Oh bind me to thee with the bonds of thy holy love, and remind me continually of the bitter death which thou hast suffered for me. O my king, my God, my love, my all, what do I

desire besides thee? "Thou art the God of my heart, and my portion for ever."

XVIII. *And bearing his own cross, he went forth to that place which is called Calvary.* St. John, xix. 17. Behold the Saviour of the world now on his last journey with the cross upon his shoulders, going to die for the love of man. The divine Lamb without murmur or complaint suffers himself to be led forth to be sacrificed upon the cross for our salvation. Go thou also, Christian soul, accompany, and follow thy Jesus, who goes to suffer death for the love of thee, to atone for thy sins. Tell me, O my Jesus and my God, what dost thou desire of men after giving thy life for their love? St. Bernard answers: "He desires nothing else but to be loved."

O my Redeemer, thou hast desired then to gain our love, at such an immense cost! And shall there be one amongst men, who believes in thee and does not love thee? I am consoled that thou art the love of all the saints, the love of Mary, and the love of thy Father; but O God, how many are there who will not even know thee! and how many who do know thee and yet will not love thee! Oh infinite love, make thyself known, make thyself loved! Oh that by shedding my blood and laying down my life I could induce all men to love thee! But alas! for the many years that I have been in the world I have indeed known thee, but I have not loved thee. But thou hast now at last drawn me by thy amiable attractions to love thee. How unhappy am I to have long ago forfeited thy grace, but the sorrow which I now feel, the desire which I have to become wholly thine, and still more the death which thou hast suffered for me afford me a lively confidence, O my love, that thou hast already pardoned me, and that at present thou lovest me. Oh that I were able, my Jesus, to die for thee, as

thou hast died for me! Although there were no punishment for those who do not love thee, I would never cease to love thee, and to do all in my power to please thee. Thou who givest me this holy resolution, give me also strength to fulfil it. My love, my hope, do not abandon me, but enable me to correspond during the remainder of my life, with the particular love which thou hast shown me. Thou desirest me for thyself, and I desire to be wholly thine. I love thee, my God, my treasure, my all. I desire to live and die, ever saying to thee: I love thee, I love thee, I love thee.

XIX. *He shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth. Isa. liii. 7.* This was the passage which the eunuch of queen Candace was reading and could not understand, when St. Philip inspired by God mounted his chariot, and explained to him that it was to be understood of our Redeemer Jesus Christ. *Acts viii. 32.* Jesus was called a lamb, because indeed, as an innocent lamb he was most barbarously treated in Pilate's hall, and afterwards led forth to die upon the cross. Hence it was that the Baptist called him a lamb: "*Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world:*" the Lamb that suffers and dies as a victim upon the cross for the sins of men. *Surely he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows. Isa. liii. 4.* Unhappy they who have not loved Jesus Christ during their life! at the last day the sight of the wrath of this Lamb will make them cry out to the mountains: *Mountains fall upon us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. Apoc. vi. 16.*

No, divine Lamb of God, if hitherto I have not loved thee, I now desire always to love thee. Before, I was blind, but now, that thou hast enlightened me and made known to me the great

evil which I have done in turning my back upon thee, and the love which thou deservest for thy goodness towards me, and for the great love which thou hast shown me, I am sorry with my whole heart for having offended thee, and I love thee above all things. O sacred wounds, O blood of my Redeemer, which have inflamed so many souls with love, inflame also my soul. O Jesus, remind me continually of thy bitter passion, and of the pains and ignominies thou didst endure for me, that I may detach my affections from all earthly things, and fix them all on thee, my only and infinite good. I love thee, O Lamb of God sacrificed and consumed upon the cross for the love of me. Thou didst not refuse to suffer for me, I will not refuse to suffer for thee, whatever thou pleasest. I will no more complain of the crosses which thou sendest me. I who ought to have been long ago in hell, how shall I complain? Give me grace to love thee and do with me what thou pleasest. "*Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?*" O my Jesus, only sin can separate me from thy love; never suffer me to be again guilty of it; grant that I may rather die a thousand times; hear this my petition I beseech thee, through the merits of thy bitter passion and death. And I beseech you, O Blessed Mary, through your holy sorrows, to obtain my preservation from the death of sin.

XX. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* St. Matt. xxvii. 46. Oh God, who shall not compassionate the Son of God, dying in torments upon the cross for the love of man? He is outwardly tormented in his body with numberless wounds, and inwardly so sorrowful and afflicted, as to seek relief from such great sufferings by praying to his Eternal Father; but his Father, to satisfy divine justice, abandons him and leaves him to die in desolation, deprived of all comfort.

O desolate death of my loving Redeemer, thou art my hope. O my forsaken Jesus, thy merits make me hope that I shall not be forsaken by thee, and separated for ever from thee in hell. I look not for consolations in this world. I embrace all the pains and desolations which thou art pleased to send me: he is not worthy of consolations, who by offending thee has deserved hell. But it is sufficient for me to love thee and to live in thy grace. For this only do I pray, that thou wilt never suffer me to be deprived of thy love. Let all others abandon me, but do not thou abandon me to such a misfortune. I love thee, my Jesus, dead and abandoned for my sake: I love thee, my only good, my only hope, my only love.

XXI. They crucified him, and with him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the midst. St. John xix. 18. The Word incarnate is called, by the divine spouse: *All lovely; such is my beloved. Cant. v. 16.* In whatever part of his life Jesus presents himself to us, he appears all lovely, all amiable; whether as an infant in the stable, a youth in the cottage of St. Joseph, a contemplative solitary in the desert, or fatigued with preaching in Judea. But in no situation does he appear so amiable to us as when nailed to the cross, upon which, through his immense love for us, he suffers and dies. St. Francis of Sales says: "The mount of Calvary is "the mount of those who love. All that love "which does not spring from the passion of our "Saviour is weak. Miserable is death without the "love of our crucified Redeemer." Let us then consider that this man of sorrows, nailed to that disgraceful tree, is our true God, and is there suffering and dying solely for the love of us.

O my Jesus, if all men contemplated thee upon the cross, with a lively faith, believing that thou art their true God, and hast died for their salvation,

how could they live without thy love and at a distance from thee? And I, knowing this, how could I have so frequently offended thee? Others, if they have offended thee, have sinned in the dark, but I have offended thee in the light. But thy pierced hands, thy opened side, thy blood, thy wounds, make me hope for thy pardon and grace. I am grieved, O my love, for ever having despised thee; but now I love thee with my whole heart, and nothing afflicts me so much as the remembrance of my having despised thee. This I hope is a sign that thou hast already pardoned me. O inflamed heart of Jesus, inflame my poor soul. O Jesus, dead and consumed with sorrows for my sake, grant me to die consumed with sorrow for having offended thee, and with the love which thou deservest. I sacrifice myself entirely to thee, as thou hast sacrificed thyself entirely for me. O most sorrowful Mother, Mary, obtain for me to be faithful in the love of your Son Jesus.

XXII. *And bowing down his head, he gave up the ghost.* St. John xix. 30. Behold, O my Redeemer, to what thy love for man has brought thee, to die in torments upon the cross, overwhelmed with a sea of pain and ignominy, as David foretold of thee: "*I am come into the depth of the sea: and a tempest hath overwhelmed me.*" Ps. lxviii. 3. St. Francis of Sales writes: "Let us consider this divine Saviour extended on the cross, as upon an altar, upon which he dies for the love of us. Ah, why do we not cast ourselves in spirit upon him to die upon the cross with him, who has been pleased there to die for the love of us? I will adhere to him, ought we to say, and will never abandon him; I will die with him and will burn in the flames of his love. The same fire shall consume this divine Creator and his miserable creature. My Jesus is all to me, I will be all to

“ him. I will live and die upon his bosom ; neither life nor death shall separate me from my Jesus.”

Yes, my dear Redeemer, I embrace thy cross, I kiss thy feet pierced with nails, softened and confounded at the sight of the affection with which thou hast died for me. Accept of me and bind me to thy feet, that I may never more part from thee, but henceforward converse only with thee, consult with thee in all my thoughts, and direct to thee all my affections, so that I may not seek any thing but to love and to please thee, and sigh continually to leave this valley of perils to come to love thee face to face with all my powers in thy kingdom, which is the kingdom of eternal love. Meanwhile grant that I may live lamenting continually my offences against thee, and ever burning with the love of thee, who hast given thy life for the love of me. I love thee, O Jesus, dead upon the cross for my sake, I love thee, who hast loved me with an infinite love, I love thee O infinite love, I love thee O infinite goodness. O Mary, Mother of beautiful love, pray to Jesus for me.

XXIII. He was offered because it was his own will. Isa. liii. 7. The Word made flesh in the instant of his conception saw before him all those souls which he had to redeem. Thou therefore, O my soul, wast then present, loaded with the guilt of all thy sins, and for thy sake Jesus accepted all the pains which he afterwards suffered during his life and at his death ; and thus obtained thy pardon and all the graces and favours which thou hast received from God, lights and calls to his holy love, strength to resist temptations, spiritual consolations, tears, emotions of tenderness in considering the love which he has borne thee, and sentiments of sorrow at the remembrance of thy offences against him.

O my Jesus, from the beginning of thy life then, thou didst take upon thyself all my sins, and offer

thyself to make satisfaction for them by thy own sorrows. Thou by thy death hast delivered me from eternal death. *Thou hast delivered my soul that it should not perish, thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.* Isa. xxxviii. 17. Instead of chastising me for the injuries which I have multiplied against thee, thou hast multiplied thy favours and mercies upon me, in order one day to gain my love. This day, my Jesus, has now arrived ; I love thee with my whole soul. And if I do not love thee, who shall love thee ? This is the first sin, my Jesus, that thou hast to pardon me, my being so many years in the world and not loving thee. But for the future I will do all in my power to please thee. I feel within me, through thy grace, a great desire of living only for thee, and of separating myself from all things created. I experience also a great displeasure for the offences I have committed against thee. This desire and this displeasure, I now see, O Jesus, are thy gifts. Continue to keep me faithful to thy love ; for thou already knowest my weakness. Make me all thine, as thou hast made thyself all mine. I love thee, my only good, I love thee, my only love, my treasure, my all. My Jesus, I love thee, I love thee, I love thee. O Mother of God, help me.

XXIV. *God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, even of sin, condemned sin in the flesh.* Rom. viii. 3. God then has sent to redeem us his Son clothed in human flesh, like to the sinful flesh of other men. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us : for it is written : Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.* Gal. iii. 13. So that Jesus was pleased to appear in the world as a malefactor accursed upon the cross, to deliver us from an eternal malediction. O Eternal Father, for the love of this thy well-beloved Son, have pity on me. And thou, O Jesus my Redeemer, who hast delivered me by thy death

from the slavery of sin, in which I was born, and from the sins which I have committed since my baptism, Oh do thou change the unhappy chains with which for a time I have been bound and held captive to the devil, into those golden chains which may bind me to thee in thy holy love. Hasten to display the efficacy of thy merits upon me, by changing me from a sinner into a saint.

I have long ago deserved to burn in hell, but I hope in thy infinite mercy for the glory of thy death to burn with thy love and to be wholly thine. I do not desire that my heart should love any thing but thee. "*Thy kingdom come.*" Reign, my Jesus, reign over my whole soul. Grant that my soul may obey only thee, and seek for and sigh after thee alone. Begone from my heart all earthly affections, and come therein sweet flames of divine love; come and possess and consume me for the sake of that God of love, who has been pleased to die consumed with love for me. I love thee, my infinitely amiable Jesus, I love thee, my true lover. There is none that has loved me as thou hast loved me, and therefore do I give and consecrate myself entirely to thee, my treasure, my God and my all.

XXV. *He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.* *Apoc. i. 5.* So that, my Jesus, to save my soul, thou hast been pleased to bathe thyself in thy own blood, and thus cleanse me from the stains of all my sins. If then our souls have been purchased with thy blood, (*you are bought with a great price: 1 Cor. vi. 20.*) it is a sign that thou hast loved them; and since thou lovest them, suffer us to pray: "*Help thy servants whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.*" It is true that by my sins I have wilfully separated myself from thee, and have voluntarily lost thee, but remember, O my Jesus, that thou hast purchased me with thy blood; O let not that blood be shed in

vain, which thou didst shed for me with so much sorrow and with so much love.

By my sins, O God, I have expelled thee from my soul, and have deserved thy hatred; but thou hast said that thou wilt forget the sins of the sinner that repents: *If the wicked do penance.....I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done. Ez. xviii. 21, 22.* Moreover thou hast said: *I love them that love me. Prov. viii.* Forget then, O Jesus, all my offences against thee, and love me; for I now love thee more than myself, and am sorry above every evil for having offended thee. O my beloved Lord, for the love of that blood which thou hast shed for my love, do not hate me, but love me. I am not content that thou shouldst only pardon me the punishment which I have deserved; I desire to love thee and to be loved by thee. O God who art all love, all goodness, unite and bind me to thee; and never suffer me to be any more separated from thee, and thus again to incur thy hatred. No, my Jesus, my love, permit it not; I desire to be always thine, and that thou mayest be always mine. I desire to be all thine, and that thou mayest be all mine.

XXVI. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Phil. ii. 8. Was it any thing great that the holy martyrs should give their lives for the love of God, if God humbled himself to give his life upon the cross for the love of them? To make a just return for the death of a God, the sacrifice of the lives of all men would not be sufficient, it would be necessary that another God should die for his love. Allow me a wretched sinner therefore, O my beloved Jesus, to say to thee with the seraphic St. Francis: "May I die, Lord, "for the love of thy love, who wast pleased to die "for the love of my love."

It is true, my beloved Redeemer, that for the past I have renounced thy love for my own sinful

indulgences ; but now enlightened and changed by thy grace, I am ready to give my life a thousand times for thy love. Oh that I had died rather than ever offended thee ! Oh that I had always loved thee ! I give thee thanks for now allowing me time to love thee in this life, that I may love thee in the next for all eternity. Grant me to be continually mindful, O my Jesus, of the ignominious death which thou hast suffered for me, that I may never forget to love thee for the love with which thou hast loved me. I love thee, O infinite goodness, I love thee, my sovereign good ; I give my whole self to thee ; and do thou, through the love which caused thee to die for me, accept of me to love thee, and let me die and be destroyed rather than suffer me ever again to cease to love thee. I will say to thee, with St Francis of Sales : " O eternal love, " my soul seeks and makes choice of thee for eternity. Come, O Holy Spirit, and inflame our hearts with thy love. O that I could love, O that " I could die : die to all other love, to live only to " the love of Jesus."

XXVII. The charity of Christ presseth us. 2 Cor. v. 14. Tender indeed and full of unction are the words which St. Francis of Sales writes upon this passage in his book on the Love of God : " Hear, " O Theotine," says he, " nothing forces and presses " the heart of man so much as love ; if a man per- " ceives that he is loved by another, be he who he " may, he feels himself forced to love him in return ; " but if a servant be loved by a great lord, he is " more powerfully forced ; and if by a monarch, " how much more ! Knowing then that Jesus truly " God has so loved us, as even to suffer death for " us, the death of the cross ; is not this to have our " hearts fixed in a press, and to feel them forced " and pressed till love is pressed out from them, by " a violence which is the more powerful, as it is " more amiable ? "

O my Jesus, since thou desirest that I should love thee, let me think continually of thy love for me, and of the pains which thou hast endured to prove thy love for me. Grant that the remembrance of them may never depart from my mind, nor from the minds of all mankind, because it is not possible to bear in mind what thou hast suffered to oblige us to love thee and not love thee in return. Hitherto this has been the cause of my wicked and irregular life, the forgetting, my Jesus, of the love which thou hast shown me. Meanwhile I certainly knew the great offence which I gave thee by my sins, and yet I committed and repeated them. Every time thou remindest me of them, I could die with grief, and should not dare to seek thy forgiveness, if I did not know that thou hast died to obtain it. Thou hast borne with me, in order that at the sight of the evil which I have done against thee, and of the death which thou hast suffered for me, I may increase in sorrow and love towards thee. I am sorry, O my Redeemer, with my whole heart, for having offended thee, and I love thee with my whole soul. After so many proofs of thy love, and after so many mercies shown to me, I do not desire to love any other but thee, and I desire to love thee with all my strength. Thou, O Jesus, art my love, my all. Thou art my love, because in thee I have placed all my affections: and thou art my all, because I desire no other but thee. Grant therefore that I may always, in life and in death, and for all eternity, call thee ever my God, my love and my all.

XXVIII. The charity of Christ presseth us. Let us again consider the force of these words. The Apostle says that we should not be induced to love Jesus Christ so much by what he has suffered for us in his passion, as by the love which he has shown us in desiring to suffer so much for us. Our Blessed Saviour said during his life that he was dying with the desire he had to die to prove to

us the immense love which he bore us: *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized: and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.* St. Luke xii. 50. And it was this love which made him say: *With desire have I desired to eat this pasch with you.* St. Luke xxii. 15.

So great then, O my Jesus, was thy desire to be loved by us, that, during thy whole life, thou didst desire nothing else but to suffer and to die for us, in order to oblige us to love thee at least through gratitude for so much love. Thou didst so much sigh after our love, and will any one ask how we can so much desire thine? How miserable am I, to have been hitherto so mad, as not only not to desire thy love, but to bring down thy hatred upon me by losing my reverence and respect for thee! My dear Redeemer, I am sensible of the evil I have done, I detest it above all evil, and am sorry for it with my whole heart. Now do I desire thy love more than all the goods of the world. My sovereign and only treasure, I love thee above all things, I love thee more than myself; I love thee with my whole soul; and nothing else do I desire but to love thee and to be loved by thee. Remember not, O Jesus, my offences against thee, but love me, and love me with a great love, that I may also love thee much. Thou art my love, thou art my hope. Thou knowest how weak I am; assist me, my love Jesus, assist me, my hope Jesus. And do you also, Mary, Mother of God, succour me by your prayers.

XXIX. *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* St. John xv. 13. And what more, my soul, could thy God do, than lay down his life to purchase thy love? Giving his life is the greatest mark of affection that one friend can show for another friend. And has such been the affection of our Creator as to be pleased to die for us his creatures? This St. John bids us consider, when he says: *In this we have*

known the charity of God, because he hath laid down his life for us. 1 St. John iii. 16. If indeed faith had not taught us that God has been pleased to die for us, to prove his love towards us, who could ever have believed it?

Ah my Jesus, I believe that thou hast died for me, and hence I acknowledge myself deserving of a thousand hells, for having repaid with injuries and ingratitude the love which thou hast borne me, in giving thy life for me. I give thee thanks for thy great mercy in having promised to pardon such as repent. Relying on this thy gracious promise, I hope for pardon, because I am sorry with my whole heart for having so often despised thy love. But since thy love has not yet abandoned me, overcome by thy love I give and consecrate my whole self to thee. Thou, my Jesus, didst end thy life by dying for me on the cross: what return can I, a miserable creature, make thee? I consecrate my life to thee, by embracing all the sufferings which shall come to me from thy hands in life and in death. Softened and confused at the sight of the many mercies which thou hast shown me, I cast myself at thy feet and embrace thy cross, and thus desire to live and die. O my Redeemer, for the love which thou hast shown me in dying for me, never suffer me to be again separated from thee. Grant me ever to live and die in thy embraces. My Jesus, my Jesus, (I repeat it) grant me ever to live and die in thy embraces.

XXX. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself.* St. John xii. 32. Thou then, my Saviour, didst say that upon the cross thou wouldest draw all our hearts to thee, and why has my heart for so many years remained at a distance from thee? Ah this has not been because thou hast been wanting on thy part. How many times hast thou called me to thy love, and I have been deaf to thy voice! How many times

hast thou also pardoned me, and lovingly admonished me by remorse of conscience not to offend thee again ; and I have again and again offended thee ! O my Jesus, condemn me not to hell, because in hell I should for ever curse all the graces which thou hast bestowed upon me ; for all thy graces, the lights which thou hast afforded me, the calls with which thou hast favoured me, the patience with which thou hast supported me, the blood which thou hast shed to save me, would be my greatest and most cruel torments. But now I hear thee calling me again, and saying to me with as much love as though I had never offended thee : “ *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.*” Thou commandest me to love thee, and I will love thee with my whole heart. But if thou didst not command me, my Jesus, after so many proofs of thy affection, could I live without loving thee ? No, I love thee, and, my sovereign good, I love thee with my whole heart. I love thee because thou commandest me to love thee : I love thee because thou art deserving of infinite love : I love thee, and desire nothing else but to love thee ; and fear nothing else but to be separated from thee, and to live without thy love. Oh my crucified love, never suffer me to cease to love thee. Remind me continually of the death which thou hast suffered for me. Remind me of the endearing ways of thy love towards me ; and grant that the remembrance of them may inflame me to love thee daily more and more, and to consume myself for thee, who hast consumed thyself a victim of love upon the cross for me.

XXXI. He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not, with him, given us all things ? Rom. viii. 32. Oh what flames of love ought these words to kindle in our hearts : “ *he delivered him up for us all !* ” It was necessary that Divine Justice, offended by our sins,

should be satisfied: and what did God do? To make satisfaction for us, he was pleased that his Son should be condemned to death and suffer the punishments due to us: "*he spared not his own Son.*" Oh God, if the Eternal Father had been capable of grief, what grief would he not have experienced in condemning to death for the sins of his servants, his own beloved and innocent Son? Let us imagine the Eternal Father saying of Jesus dead for our sins: *For the wickedness of my people have I struck him. Isa. liii. 8.* With great reason did St. Francis of Paula, while meditating on the death of Jesus Christ, exclaim in ecstacies of love: "O charity! O charity! O charity!" On the other hand, what confidence should not the words which follow afford us: "*How hath he not, with him, given us all things?*" And how, my God, can I be afraid that thou wilt not grant me pardon, perseverance, thy love, thy paradise, and all the graces which I can hope for from thee, after thou hast given me the object most dear to thee, thy own beloved Son? I know what I must do to obtain all good things from thee, I must ask them for the love of Jesus Christ; of this Jesus himself assures me: *Amen, amen, I say to you; if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it you. St. John xvi. 23.*

My sovereign and eternal God, I have heretofore despised thy infinite majesty and goodness: but now I love thee above all things: and because I love thee, I am sorry with my whole heart for having offended thee: and I am resolved to accept of every pain and death itself rather than offend thee any more. Pardon me, and grant me the grace, which, relying on the promise of Jesus Christ, I now ask of thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, I beseech thee to grant me holy perseverance until the end of my life, pure and perfect love for thee, perfect conformity to thy blessed will, and finally

the happiness of heaven. And I ask and hope for all these favours through the merits of Jesus Christ. I am not deserving of any thing but punishments, and not of favours; but thou dost not deny any thing to him who prays to thee through the love of Jesus Christ. Ah my good God, I know that thou desirest that I should be all thine, and such do I desire to be: and I will not fear that my sins should hinder me from becoming all thine; since Jesus Christ has made satisfaction for them all, and thou for the love of Jesus Christ art ready to grant me whatever I desire, this is my desire and my petition; grant it O God; to love thee, to love thee with all my powers, and to be entirely thine. Most holy Mary, help me.

XXXII. But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles foolishness. 1 Cor. i. 23. St. Paul testifies to us that the Gentiles, hearing him preach that the Son of God had been crucified for the salvation of men, esteemed it foolishness; as they might have said: Who can believe such folly as that a God would die for his creatures? "It appeared folly," says St. Gregory, "to suppose that God could wish his Son to die for man's salvation."

My beloved Redeemer, Oh that I could possess the hearts of all mankind, and with them love thee as thou deservest! O God of love, why hast thou spilt thy blood and given thy life for the love of men, since so few burn with thy love? Thou camest to kindle in our hearts the fire of this thy love, and desiredst nothing else but to see it kindled. I beseech thee, therefore, with thy holy Church, for myself and for all men living: "*en-kindle in our hearts the fire of thy love.*" My God, all goodness, all love, O infinitely amiable and loving God, make thyself known and loved by all. I am not ashamed to pray thus to thee, I who more than others have for the past despised thy love:

for now, enlightened by thy light, and pierced with so many darts of love from thy heart, inflamed with love for my soul, I desire never more to be ungrateful to thee, as I hitherto have been, but I desire to love thee with all my powers, and to burn with thy love, which thou desirest to kindle within me. I look not for consolations and spiritual sweetness in loving thee; I do not deserve them, nor do I ask for them, it will be sufficient for me to love thee. I love thee, my sovereign good, I love thee, my God and my all.

XXXIII. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all and the Lord was pleased to bruise him. Isa. liii. 6, 10. See to what a degree divine love proceeded. The Eternal Father loaded his own Son with all our sins, and was pleased that he should rigorously suffer the punishments due to us for them, by dying upon a disgraceful cross in pain and ignominy. With good reason, therefore, does the Apostle call this *the too great charity with which God loved us. Eph. ii. 4.*

Too much therefore, O my God, hast thou loved me, and too much have I been ungrateful to thee, in offending thee, and so often turning my back upon thee. Behold, O Eternal Father, thy Son upon the cross, wounded and dead for my sake; and for the love of him forgive me and draw my whole heart to thee. "*A contrite and humble heart thou wilt not despise.*" Thou for the love of Jesus Christ, dead for my salvation, wilt not despise a contrite and humble heart. I know that I deserve a thousand hells, but I am sorry with my whole heart for having offended thee, my sovereign good. Do not reject me, but have pity on me. Grant me not only thy pardon, but also a great love for thee, which may make some amends for my many offences against thee. I love thee, O infinite goodness, I love thee, O God of love. It would be but little were I to die and be consumed for thee. I

desire to love thee as much as thou deservest. But I know that of myself I can do nothing: make me grateful to thee for thy immense love towards me, I beseech thee, for the love of Jesus Christ thy Son. Grant that during life I may conquer all to please thee; and that at my death I may depart in perfect resignation to thy will, to come to love thee face to face with perfect love for ever in heaven.

XXXIV. *I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep.* St. John x. 11. O my Jesus, what sayest thou? What shepherd was ever pleased to give his life for his sheep? Only thou; because thou art a God of infinite love, thou alone art able to say: "*And I lay down my life for my sheep.*" Thou alone couldst show to the world such an excess of love, who being God and our supreme Lord, wast pleased to die for us. Of this excess Moses and Elias spoke on mount Thabor: *They spoke of his excess, which he should accomplish in Jerusalem.* St. Luke ix. 31. Hence St. John reminds us, saying: *Let us therefore love God, because God first hath loved us.* 1 St. John iv. 19. As though he had said: if we do not love God on account of his infinite goodness, let us at least love him for the love which he has shown us, in being pleased to suffer for us the punishments which we had deserved.

Remind me continually, O my Jesus, that I am one of those sheep for whom thou layedst down thy life. O do thou look upon me with those looks of pity with which thou didst look upon me from thy cross when dying for me; look on me, change me, and save me. Thou sayest thou art that loving shepherd, who finding the lost sheep, takest it with joy upon thy shoulders, and carrying it home, callest together thy friends and neighbours to rejoice with thee for having found thy sheep that was lost. Behold I am the lost sheep, seek me and find me: *I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost; seek thy servant.* Ps. cxviii. 176.

If through my own fault thou hast not already found me; take me now and bind me to thee, that I may not stray to perdition. Let the bands be those of thy love; if thou dost not bind me with these sweet bands, I shall again be lost. Ah thou hast not failed to bind me to thee with thy love; but I have always ungratefully fled from thee. But I beseech thee through that mercy which caused thee to descend upon the earth, in order to find me, Oh bind me, but bind me with redoubled bands of love, that thou mayest never more lose me, and I may never more lose thee. My beloved Redeemer, I will never more separate myself from thee. I renounce all earthly goods and desires, and I offer myself to suffer every pain, and death itself that I may ever live and die united with thee. I love thee, my most amiable Jesus, I love thee, my good Shepherd, who hast died for me thy lost sheep, which now loves thee more than itself, and desires nothing else but to love thee and to be consumed with thy love. Have pity on me; love me, and never suffer me again to stray from thee.

XXXV. *I lay down my life..... no man taketh it away from me; but I lay it down of myself.* St. John, x. 16, 17. Behold, then, the Word made flesh, influenced solely by his love for us, accepts of the death of the cross to restore us to the life which we had lost. "Behold," says St. Thomas, "God "does for man, what no other could have done, "as if man had been the God of God, and as if "God without man could not in himself have been "happy." We had sinned and by sinning we had deserved eternal torments: and what does Jesus do? he takes upon himself the obligation of making satisfaction for us, and by his sufferings and death pays the price of our redemption: *Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows.* Isa. liii. 4.

Ah my Jesus, since I have been the cause of so

much sorrow and bitterness to thee upon the earth, O give me, I beseech thee, some share of thy sorrow for my sins, that I may have confidence in thy passion. What would have become of me, O Lord, if thou hadst not been pleased to make satisfaction for me? O infinite majesty, I am sorry from the bottom of my heart for having offended thee, but I hope for mercy from thee, O infinite goodness. Apply to my soul, O Saviour of the world, the fruit of thy death, and instead of a rebellious and ungrateful sinner, make me thy loving child, so to love thee as to love no other but thee and to fear nothing but thy displeasure. May the excessive love which caused thee to die for me on the cross, stifle within me all earthly affections. My Jesus, take possession of my wholé body, so that it may serve only to obey thee; take possession of my whole heart, so that it may desire nothing but to please thee; take possession of my whole will, so that it may will nothing but what thou willest. I embrace thee and press thee to my heart. O my Redeemer, do not disdain to be united with me. I love thee, O God of love, I love thee, my only good. And how shall I have the heart to leave thee, now that thou hast made me sensible how much thou hast loved me, and how many mercies thou hast exercised towards me, exchanging the chastisements which were due to me for graces and favours? O holy Virgin, obtain for me the grace of being faithful to thy Son Jesus.

XXXVI. Blotting out the hand writing of the decree that was against us, and he hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross. Coloss. ii. 14. Sentence was written against us by which we were condemned to eternal death as rebels against infinite majesty. And what has Jesus Christ done? with his blood he has canceled the writing of condemnation, and to deliver us from all fear has affixed it to his own cross, upon which

by dying he has made satisfaction to divine justice for us. My soul, see the obligation under which thou art placed to this thy Redeemer ; and listen to the admonition of the Holy Spirit: *Forget not the kindness of thy surety, for he has given his life for thee.* Eccl. xxix. 19. Forget not the kindness of him who taking thy debts upon himself has paid them, and has affixed their discharge upon the cross. When then thou rememberest thy sins, look on the cross and hope : look on that sacred wood purpled with the blood of the Lamb of God sacrificed for thy love, and hope in and love a God who has so loved thee.

Yes, my Jesus, I hope for all from thy infinite bounty. It is for thy divine mercy, to render good for evil to him, who, arising from his sins, is sorry for having committed them, and loves thee. Yes, my beloved Redeemer, I am sorry above every evil, for having so much despised thy infinite goodness ; and pierced with thy love, I love thee ; and desire to please thee in all that thou appointest. Alas ! when I was in sin, I was a slave of the devil, and he was my cruel master. Now, that I hope I am in thy grace, thou, my Jesus, art my only Lord, my only love. Take possession of me, entirely and for ever, for I desire to be entirely and eternally thine. No, I will never forget the pains which thou hast suffered for me, that I may always become more and more inflamed with thy love. I love thee, my most amiable Redeemer, I love thee, O Word made flesh, my treasure, my all, I love thee, I love thee.

XXXVII. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just : and he is the propitiation for our sins.* 1 St. John ii. 1, 2. Oh what great confidence do these words give to penitent sinners ! Jesus Christ is their advocate in heaven, and will assuredly obtain pardon for them. The devil, when the sinner escapes from his chains,

tempts him to despair of pardon. But St. Paul gives him confidence: *Who is he that shall condemn? Jesus Christ that died who also maketh intercession for us. Rom. viii. 34.* As though he had said: If we detest our sins, why should we fear? Who is it that shall condemn us? it is Jesus Christ, he who died that he might not condemn us, and is at present in heaven making intercession for us. He goes on to say: "*Who shall separate us from "the love of Jesus Christ?*" As if he had said: But after we have been pardoned with so much love by Jesus Christ, and received into his grace and favour, who shall ever have the heart to turn his back upon him and separate himself from his love?

No, my Jesus, I will not trust myself to live any more separated from thee and deprived of thy love. I lament those unhappy days when I lived deprived of thy grace. I now hope that thou hast pardoned me; I love thee, and thou lovest me. Thou however lovest me with an immense love, and I love thee but very little; help me to love thee still more and more. O infinite goodness, I am sorry above every evil for having, during the time past, treated thee so unworthily; I now love thee above all things, more than myself, and I am more delighted, my God, that thou art infinitely happy, than on account of my own felicity, because I love thee who art deserving of infinite love more than myself, who deserve nothing but hell. O my Jesus, I desire nothing from thee but thyself.

XXXVIII. *Come to me all you that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. St. Matt. xi. 28.* Let us listen to Jesus Christ fastened to the cross, and on the altar where he resides sacramentally, calling us poor sinners to him, to console and enrich us with his graces. Oh what great mysteries of love for us are the passion of Jesus and the Sacrament of the Eucharist! **Mysteries,**

which if faith did not teach them, would be incredible. A God to choose to shed the last drop of his blood! and why? to make satisfaction for our sins! And then to be pleased to give us, for the food of our souls, his own body, already sacrificed for us on the cross! These great mysteries ought to soften the hardest hearts, and to save the most desperate sinners. The Apostle says: *In all things you are made rich in him so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace.* 1 Cor. i. 5, 7. It is sufficient to beseech God to be merciful to us, and he will abound in graces towards every one who beseeches him, as the same Apostle assures us: *Rich to all that call upon him.* Rom. x. 12.

If then, my Saviour, I have reason to despair on account of my sins and treasons against thee, I have much more reason to hope on account of thy infinite goodness. Father, I thy ungrateful child had left thee, but now I return to prostrate myself at thy feet, overcome with grief and softened by thy many mercies towards me, and I say most humbly: " *Father, I am not worthy to be called thy child.*" Thou hast said that there is joy in heaven when a sinner repents: *There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance.* St. Luke, xv. 7. Behold I leave all, and turn myself to thee, my crucified Father; I am sorry with all my heart for having lost my respect for thee, and for having turned my back upon thee. Receive me again into thy favour, and inflame my soul with thy holy love, that I may never more leave thee. Thou hast said: *I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly.* St. John, x. 10. On this account do I hope not only to receive the grace, which I enjoyed before I offended thee, but a more abundant grace which may make me all on fire with thy love. Oh that I could love thee, my God, as much as thou deservest to be loved! I love thee above all things, I love thee more than myself, I love thee

with my whole heart, and desire to love thee for ever in heaven: *What have I in heaven? and besides thee, what do I desire upon earth?* Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever. Ps. lxxiii. 25. O God of my heart, take, and keep possession of my whole soul, and expel from it every affection that is not fixed on thee. Thou art my only treasure, my only love. I desire thee alone. O Mary, my hope, by your holy prayers draw me entirely to God.

Spiritual Maxims.

WHAT will it avail us to gain the whole world and lose our souls?

All things will have an end; eternity will never have an end.

All may be lost, provided God be not lost.

No sin, however slight, is a trifling evil.

If we would please God, we must deny ourselves.

Whatever we do solely for our own satisfaction is entirely lost.

To be saved, we must always be afraid of falling.

Die to thyself, and please God.

Sin is the only evil of which we need be afraid.

Whatever God wills is all good, and ought to be all that we desire.

He who wills only what God wills is always happy, whatever may happen.

I ought to imagine that there is nothing else in the world but God and myself.

The whole world cannot satisfy our hearts, only God can satisfy them.

All good consists in the love of God. And the love of God consists in doing his will.

All our riches are in prayer. He who prays, obtains what he asks for.

Consider that day as lost in which you have not

exercised yourself in mental prayer. "He who "neglects prayer," says St. Teresa, "of himself "casts himself into hell."

Never let a day pass without reading some spiritual book.

Punctilio of honour are the pestilence of the soul.

To be humble of heart and not of word, it is not sufficient to say that we deserve to be despised by all, but we must also be pleased when we happen to be despised.

What is a Christian, if he cannot submit to an affront for Christ's sake? When you are injured, smile at the injuries you receive.

To him who recollects that he has deserved hell, all pain and suffering are light.

He who loves poverty possesses all things. In worldly things choose the worst, in things of God choose the best.

An obedient soul is the delight of God.

True charity consists in doing good to those who do evil to us, in order to gain them to virtue.

What do riches and honours avail at the hour of death?

It is a great favour of God to be called by him to his love.

God leaves no good desire unrewarded.

Every attachment, even to good things (except to God) is not good.

Let us be grateful, but, first of all, to God. Hence let us resolve to deny nothing to God, and ever to choose what will be most pleasing to him.

Our best prayer is the conforming ourselves in the time of sickness to the divine will.

A holy life and the pleasures of sense are incompatible.

He who confides in himself is lost. He who confides in God can do all things.

What greater pleasure can the soul enjoy than to know that she is pleasing to God?

God is ready to give himself wholly to him who renounces all things for God's love.

The only way of sanctity is the way of suffering.

By aridities and temptations God proves those who love him.

He who loves God and confides in him cannot be lost.

Let us pray to God to give us a tender devotion to his blessed Mother.

He bears all things patiently who looks on Christ crucified.

In this world, he that loves God most is the most happy. Every thing becomes painful that is not done for God.

No kind of disquiet, even on account of good things, comes from God.

He who would arrive at his journey's end must not stand still.

He who desires only God, is rich and happy : he is in want of nothing, and sets the world at nought.

Nothing will suffice for him for whom God is not sufficient : God, God, and nothing more. We must conquer all to gain all.

Aspirations of love for Jesus Christ.

MY Jesus, thou alone art sufficient for me.

My love, never suffer me to be separated from thee.

When shall I be able to say to thee : My God, I can never more lose thee ?

Lord, who am I, that thou shouldst so much desire to be loved by me ?

Whom shall I love, if I love not thee, my Jesus ?

Behold me, O Lord, dispose of me as thou pleasest. Give me thy love, I ask for nothing more.

Before I die, make me all thine own.

Eternal Father, for the love of Jesus Christ have pity on me.

My God, I desire thee alone.

Oh that I might be entirely consumed, my Jesus,
for the love of thee, who wast consumed for the
love of me.

If I had died when I was in sin, I could have
loved thee no more. Now that I can love thee, I
desire to love thee as much as I am able.

To thee do I consecrate the remainder of my life.

I desire only thee, and I desire all that thou desirest.

Grant that when I first behold thee, my Jesus, I
may behold thee appeased.

Rather let me die than offend thee any more.

Thou wilt not forsake me, I will not forsake thee.
I will always love thee, my God, both in this life
and in the next.

I should be too ungrateful to thee, O my Jesus,
if after so many graces I should love thee but little.

Thou hast given thyself wholly to me, I give
myself wholly to thee.

Thou lovest those who love thee: I love thee, O
do thou also love me. If I love thee but little, give
me the love which thou requirest of me.

Thou hast exceedingly obliged me to love thee;
grant that I may conquer all things to please thee.

Accept of a soul to love thee which has often-
times offended thee.

Grant me to know the immensity of thy good-
ness, that I may indeed love thee.

I desire to love thee ardently in this life, that I
may ardently love thee for ever in the next.

O eternal God, I hope to love thee for all eternity.

Oh that I had always loved thee! Oh that I
had died rather than offended thee!

I give thee my will, my liberty, dispose of me as
thou pleasest.

May my only pleasure be to please thee!

O my God, I rejoice that thou art infinitely happy.

Thou art omnipotent: make me holy.

Thou didst seek me when I fled away from thee;

thou didst love me when I despised thy love ; do not abandon me now when I seek thee and love thee.

Now do I give myself wholly to thee.

Chastise me as thou pleasest, but deprive me not of the power of loving thee.

I thank thee for giving me time in which to love thee.

I love thee, my Jesus, I love thee ; and hope to end my life saying : *I love thee, I love thee.*

I desire to love thee without reserve, and to do all that I know will be pleasing to thee.

I love thy pleasure more than all the pleasures of the world.

I accept of all pains, because I love thee, O my God. Oh that I were able, my Jesus, to die for thee, who hast been pleased to die for me !

Oh that I were able to make all men love thee as thou deservest !

O holy will of God, thou art my love.

O God of love, give me love.

O Mary, draw me all to God.

O holy Mother, may I always have recourse to you ; by your holy intercession I hope to become a saint.

Prayer of St. Bonaventure to Jesus Christ,

To obtain his holy love.

MOST sweet Jesus, pierce the interior of my soul with the most sweet wound of thy love, that my soul may ever languish and be dissolved with thy love and with the desire of possessing thee, and on this account long to quit this life, that it may come to be perfectly united with thee in a blessed eternity. Grant that my soul may ever thirst after thee, ever seek thee, speak only to thee, find thee, and do all for thy glory. Grant that my heart

may be ever fixed on thee, who art my only hope, my riches, my peace, my refuge, my confidence, my treasure and my inheritance.

A short Prayer,

Which may be said every day, to Jesus Christ crucified, to obtain a happy death.

MY Lord Jesus Christ, through that bitterness which thou didst suffer on the cross, when thy blessed soul was separated from thy sacred body, have pity on my sinful soul, when it shall depart from my miserable body, and shall enter into eternity.

Prayer to the Blessed Virgin

To obtain the love of Jesus and a happy death.

O MARY, you who desire so much to see Jesus loved, if you love me, this is the favour which I ask of you, to obtain for me a great love for Jesus Christ. You obtain from your Son whatever you please; pray then for me, and console me. Obtain for me a great love towards you, who of all creatures are the most loving and beloved of God. And through that grief which you suffered on Calvary, when you beheld Jesus expire on the cross, obtain for me a happy death, that by loving Jesus and you, my Mother, I may come to love you for ever in heaven.

F I N I S.

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